

DICASTERIUM
PRO
DIALOGO INTER RELIGIONES

Pro Dialogo

TEACHINGS AND DISCOURSES
OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS

2024

Focus on

Apostolic Journey to Indonesia, Papua
New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Singapore
(2-13 September 2024)

177 (LIX) 2024/2

Teachings and Discourses of pope Francis 2024

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Apostolic Journey in Indonesia, Interreligious Meeting, Jakarta, 5th September 2024

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In this volume

Volume 177 of *Pro Dialogo* presents, in chronological order, the main teachings on interreligious dialogue and related topics that Pope Francis offered in 2024.

Peace

In his address to the Diplomatic Corps, the Pope denounced the weakening of multilateral diplomacy and the need to restore the spirit and values that marked the rise of international organisations after World War II, while reaffirming the central role of interreligious dialogue, religious freedom and respect for minorities. More than 360 million Christians in the world suffer discrimination and persecution, and more and more of them are forced to flee their lands (8 January). Now they risk losing their religious identity as well, and with the passing of generations, the spiritual heritage of the East, an invaluable treasure for the Catholic Church, is weakened (27 June). Diplomacy must be untiring in the pursuit of peace (9 May). To ensure lasting peace, we must return to a recognition of our common humanity and place fraternity at the centre of peoples' lives (10 May). We need a kind of politics capable of forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future (14 June).

Let us not stop dreaming of peace, which gives us the unexpected joy of feeling part of the one human family. Instead of deceiving ourselves that war can resolve problems and bring about peace, we need to be vigilant and critical towards an ideology that is unfortunately dominant today, which claims that conflict, violence and breakdown are part of the normal functioning of a society. What is really at stake are the power struggles between different social groups, partisan economic interests, and international political manoeuvres aimed at an apparent peace yet fleeing from real problems. (7 June). What is needed are peacemakers who oppose the relentless and stubborn logic of confrontation and know how to open up peaceful paths of encounter and dialogue (7 June). This is particularly true for diplomats (8 June).

In reminding a group of newly accredited Ambassadors that “the international community cannot renounce its duty to seek peace by fostering dialogue, reconciliation, mutual understanding, respect for the dignity and rights of each individual and people, and for the demands of international law”, the Pope invited them to ‘work with courage and creativity in the promotion of bonds of friendship, cooperation and dialogue in the service of peace’ (7 December).

‘We must prevent religions from succumbing to the temptation to become a means of nurturing forms of nationalism, ethnocentrism and populism [...]. Woe to those who try to drag God into taking sides in wars!’ (17 September).

Jews and Catholics must cooperate for peace and justice in the Holy Land (2 February). The deserts of hatred can bring forth hope in the hearts of individuals and peoples if we learn to walk in mutual respect, and this also applies to Christians in the Middle East (12 April). Dialogue is the only path for peace, for encountering one another. Young people can be great artisans of peace through dialogue. (25 November).

Goodness, trust and love can bring about a society based on ‘caring relationships’ following the example of Jesus and make the common home a place of fraternity (19 April). ‘Listen, dream, act!’ is also the call to combat human trafficking (8 February).

Reparation requires acknowledgement of guilt and asking for forgiveness (4 May). Forgiveness is the subject of the Message for the World Day of Peace 2025, published as usual on the 8th of December. The call for disarmament and debt forgiveness of poor countries is at the heart of it. But the invitation to always forgive applies specially to ministers of reconciliation and to consecrated people (Angelus, 15 December)

A presence that fosters words and gestures of peace, brotherhood and respect, invites to reason, to reconciliation, overcoming with goodwill the divisions and enmities stratified and hardened over time, which are becoming more and more inextricable (28 August). Being experienced ‘peacemakers’ (cf. Mt 5:9), means creating opportunities for encounters, mediating conflict resolution, bringing people together and promoting a culture of reconciliation, even in the most difficult situations (31 August).

Even in the world of finance, in order to solve the debt crisis of poor countries, it is essential to think of a new international financial architecture that is bold and creative, and to act in good faith and truthfully, following an international code of conduct with ethical standards that can guide dialogue between the parties (5 June).

Dialogue of charity and truth, friendship

Pope Francis explained that the dialogue of charity is ‘theology in action’ because it opens up new horizons for our Churches in view of full communion with the Eastern Churches (12 and 26 January), hoping that the fruits of theological dialogue will find full reception in communities and places of formation (28 June). The Holy Spirit opens new paths and leads to truth (2 May), accompanied by the God of hope (20 June). Catholic and Orthodox churches must continue their

journey towards unity with the synodal method of listening to each other without condemning (*30 November*).

Theological dialogue is indispensable in our journey towards unity, since the unity we yearn for is unity in faith, while the dialogue of truth must never be separated from the dialogue of charity and the dialogue of life. In this way, it is a complete and human dialogue' (*9 November*). Theology must rekindle hope, putting Christ at the centre with perseverance, wisdom and foresight, in dialogue with all other fields of knowledge (*28 November*). At the conference on the future of theology, organised by the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the Pope invited people to keep their doors open to people in crisis, who 'sense a need to renew their quest, however tentatively, perhaps even with a helping hand. Theology can be that guide on the journey!' (*9 December*).

Service, mission and joy are the themes developed by the Holy Father in Luxembourg Cathedral, with the invitation to face the challenge of a Church that must evolve, mature and grow within a secularised society (*26 September*). The balance and hospitality of Luxembourg culture took the Holy Father by surprise! (*29 September*).

The caring for intercultural and interreligious dialogue is the means of fostering mutual understanding, cooperation and bridge-building between different traditions, cultures and worldviews (*20 May*), as the Pope also reminded the Thai Buddhists (*27 May*). Interreligious dialogue 'is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities' (*3 June*). At the Kerala Interfaith Conference, he recalled that 'as followers of our respective religious traditions, we ought always to cooperate with all people of good will in promoting "a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity"' (*30 November*).

The religious factor, by its very nature, should not be exploited, rather it should help soften the harshness of contrasts and create a space for everyone to be granted full citizenship rights, on an equal footing and without discrimination. (*7 August*) Communication too must foster inclusion, dialogue and the quest for peace (*31 October*). It is a matter of developing the ability to listen and the art of dialogue, which are naturally anchored in a life of prayer, where one enters into dialogue with the Lord, pausing in His presence to learn from Him the art of self-giving love, so that little by little one's existence becomes attuned to the Master's heart (*1 August*).

During his pastoral visit to Ajaccio, the Holy Father explained that the most effective means of evangelisation is 'Care for others: those who follow Jesus' teaching, those who have strayed from him, those who need to be set back on the right track or find consolation amid their sufferings. Care for everyone, in formation and above all in encounter. Encounter people where they live and work; that is important.' (*15 December*).

University, education and dialogue

The missionary and intercultural character of academic institutions must train the ability to mediate the Christian message towards other cultures and religions (30 August). If University wants to be a place and an instrument of the Church's mission, must elaborate knowledge generated by God, tested in dialogue with humanity, abandoning the 'us and the others' approach. The Pope made a comparison between the exchange of books and the exchange of ideas, which truly enriches those involved: 'The university is a place of dialogue. Let's try and imagine two students arriving with a book each, which they then exchange. Each of them will go home with one book, but if these students exchange a thought or an idea as they leave, each one of them will take home some additional thought or idea. However, it is not just a matter of quantity: each of them will be in debt to the other, each will be part of the other' (5 November).

In particular, polyglots, in addition to their ability to understand and speak several languages, tend to have finer analytical skills, better communication and social skills, and a greater aptitude for discernment. In this sense, they are better equipped to appreciate the richness of other cultures, including those far removed from their own (9 September). 'Culture understood as taking care of oneself must, therefore, involve care for others. There is no conflict between students and professors. There is dialogue. It is more intense at times, but there is dialogue and dialogue allows the university community to grow' (28 September).

'I have often repeated an African proverb that states that it takes a whole village to educate a child. Let us make every effort, then, to build such an 'educational village', where we can work together to promote positive and culturally fruitful human relationships. Through these close relationships, an educational covenant can certainly arise among all those who work for the personal growth of individuals in its various aspects - scientific, political, artistic, athletic and other aspects. Education is not a process that ends once we leave the classroom or the library, it continues throughout life, in our daily encounters with others and on the paths we take. Listening to each other, reflecting on dialogue: this is the way of education (9 November).

'Educating is to help one to think well, to feel well and to do good. The three languages: the language of the heart - feeling well - the language of the head - thinking well - and the language of the hands - doing good. But all of them in harmony: to do what one feels and thinks; to feel what one thinks and does; to think what one feels and does. These three languages, united, all of them' (21 November)

Harmony

In Jakarta, Indonesia, the land of harmony, the Pope has reiterated that harmony in diversity is achieved when particular perspectives take into account the needs common to all, and when each ethnic group and religious denomination acts in a spirit of fraternity, pursuing the noble goal of serving the good of all. The awareness of participating in a shared history, in which solidarity is essential and contributions are made by all, helps to identify the right solutions, to avoid the exasperation of contrasts and to transform opposition into effective cooperation. To the clergy, also in Jakarta, the Pope gave a message that applies to all: 'Faith, Fraternity, Compassion... are the three virtues that express well both your journey as a Church and your character as a people, which is ethnically and culturally diverse. At the same time, you are characterised by an innate commitment to unity and peaceful coexistence, as witnessed by the traditional principles of Pancasila' (4 September). Religious leaders, in particular, inspired by their respective spiritual narratives and traditions, should work together to respond to environmental crises, identifying their causes and taking appropriate action (5 September). Spiritual values greatly influence the building of the earthly city and all temporal realities. In other words, these values infuse a soul, inspire and strengthen every project (7 September).

On several occasions during the apostolic journey to Indonesia, Papua, Timor and Singapore, the Pope urged everyone to dream of fraternity, to sow seeds of love, to walk the path of dialogue with confidence, to continue to show goodness and kindness (5 and 9 September), to spread the fragrance of Christ and the Gospel, a fragrance that enriches life and fills us with joy more than the sandalwood of Timor (10 September).

Pope Francis praised Singapore's commitment to sustainable development and the preservation of creation by finding innovative solutions to environmental challenges. which may encourage other countries to do the same. 'Singapore is a shining example of what humanity can achieve by working together in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and a spirit of inclusiveness and fraternity. This resembles a summary of your attitude: working together in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and in a spirit of fraternity and inclusiveness' (12 September).

Inaugurating the Tunnel of Friendship, which connects the Mosque and the Cathedral in Jakarta, the Pope recalled the 'mystique' of living together, of mingling, of encounter, of taking each other in our arms, of supporting each other, of participating in this somewhat chaotic flood tide that can turn into a genuine experience of fraternity, into a caravan of solidarity, into a holy pilgrimage (5 September).

Speaking to young people at the interfaith meeting in Singapore, the Pope

compared religions to languages as ways of reaching God: ‘There is only one God, and religions are like languages, paths to reach God. Some Sikhs, some Muslims, some Hindus, some Christians. Understood? Yet, interfaith dialogue among young people takes courage. The age of youth is the age of courage, but you can misuse this courage to do things that will not help you. Instead, you should have the courage to move forward and to dialogue’ (13 September). Similarly, encouraging young Italians to get involved in public institutions, the Pope said that ‘It is necessary in life also to go through conflicts. You need the patience to transform them into the ability to listen, to acknowledge the other, to grow together. Trying to overcome conflicts is a sign that we have aimed higher, higher than our own self-interest, to get out of the quicksand of social enmity’ (16 November).

Universal brotherhood and care for the ‘common home’

On several occasions, the Holy Father expanded on the message of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, denouncing the selfishness that prevents us from overcoming the barriers of geography and distance (25 January). Five years after the signing of the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity, the journey of dialogue continues, but environmental destruction and social degradation remain a cause for concern. It is necessary to change the perception of the other in publications, speeches, and teaching (4 February), to walk in respect for diversity, commitment to the ‘common home’ and the promotion of peace (4 April). The witness of fraternity between Christians, Jews and Muslims is indispensable and precious (26 June). As in the family, ‘dialogue between believers of different religions does just that: it enables us to step out of our own familiar patterns of thinking and acting, and to be open to encounter within the greater human family. But for dialogue to be fruitful, it must meet several conditions: it must be open, it must be sincere, it must be respectful, it must be friendly and it must be concrete’ (20 November).

The Pope thanked a delegation of Jains ‘for your efforts to seek together ways of caring for the earth, the poor and the most vulnerable in society’, which require initiatives undertaken with seriousness and commitment, as well as a sense of shared responsibility (25 November).

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us how ‘a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others’, towards whom one acts as a neighbour (11 April). This means walking together, listening to each other, engaging in dialogue, even arguing, but always as a community (25 May).

Care for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, the protection of life and the family, defence of the dignity of every human life, as well as outer and inner peace all belong together (29 May).

As concrete signs of attention to the promotion of ecological conversion, the Pontiff wanted an agri-voltaic plant in Santa Maria di Galeria (Rome) to supply the Vatican City State's energy needs with 'green' energy (28 June); He created the '*Borgo Laudato si*' in Castel Gandolfo, linked to the Centre for Higher Education by the same name, which he also wished to implement the encyclical *Laudato si*' (19 September).

In the same perspective, one must read the invitation addressed to popular movements: 'Our journey continues dreaming and working together so that all workers have rights, all families a roof, all farmers a land, all children an education, all young people a future, all elderly people a good pension, all women equal rights, all peoples sovereignty, all indigenous people a territory, all migrants a welcome, all ethnic groups respect, all creeds freedom, all regions peace, all ecosystems protection. It is a constant journey, there will be progress and setbacks, there will be mistakes and successes, but have no doubt: it is the right path. (20 September).

The Holy See supports the efforts of the international community especially in the field of integral ecology education and in raising awareness of the environment as 'a human and social problem on any number of levels' (13 November).

The vision of nature, in its entirety, as a gift from God, invites us to reflect on our responsibility for the common home. There can and must be dialogue between science and faith: both are called upon to guide our understanding of the world (23 October).

Artificial Intelligence

The Pope has repeatedly stressed the risk that artificial intelligence could reinforce the technocratic paradigm and the culture of waste, exacerbate disparities between advanced and developing countries, and delegate to a machine essential decisions with regard to human life (22 June). The cultural richness of peoples and religions must be a guide to technological innovation (10 July). The risks of manipulative applications of artificial intelligence for shaping public opinion, influencing consumer choices and interfering with electoral processes need to be acknowledged and prevented (23 September). 'The choice to be made is between manipulating nature or caring for it. [...]. And we must begin with our human nature, including issues of eugenics, cybernetic organisms and artificial intelligence. Yet the choice between manipulating or cultivating also concerns our interior lives' (28 September).

The Pope has asked the research centres of our universities to study the current 'technological revolution' in order to shed light on its benefits and dangers (21 November). But if it is true that the technocratic paradigm remains dominant, there is a need for a new culture, capable of making room for an ethic, a culture

and a spirituality, which are suitably solid (3 June), a culture that broadens boundaries and avoids 'sectarianism', or the exaltation of oneself above others. A culture immersed as a good 'leaven' in our world, contributing to the common good of humanity (27 September).

Faith and Culture in Europe

In Europe, ecclesial and civil communities must discover ways to express their faith and culture with creative fidelity to their rich traditions. In this way, they will be able to contribute to building up a Europe made up of peoples living in harmony, side by side, preserving their distinctiveness, yet open to encounter and dialogue with the other cultures of our world (11 June), within the context of a correct relationship between religion and society (7 July).

Europe needs countries like Belgium in order to continue along the path of peace and of fraternity among its peoples. 'When nations disregard borders or breach treaties by employing the most varied and untenable excuses, and when they use weapons to replace actual law with the principle of 'might is right', then they open Pandora's box, unleashing violent storms that batter the house, threatening to destroy it' (27 September).

Synodality, hope, integral development

Synodal men and women have matured the ability to engage in dialogue, to interrelate, to search together. In this sense, they are pilgrims of hope (25 April). Hope is not an emotion or a feeling, but the very person of Jesus (10 May). Through the practice of discernment, which is personal and truth-oriented, the Church accompanies our brothers and sisters in faith, to walk together, not alone, and thus our interior growth is greatly enriched. In this sense, discernment is synodal. Young people must be empowered, involved in dialogue, planning and decision-making (25 May). It is important for them to see models of hope and idealism that counter the messages of pessimism and cynicism to which they are so often exposed. War is not hope; war does not give hope. Let commitment to the common good, sustained by trust in the promises of Christ, be an example to our young people (24 August).

Live as pilgrims of hope. With courage, do not tire of dreaming of just peace and fraternity, for this is also the Father's dream: that his children may be united and happy, recognising each other as brothers and sisters. Look beyond the night! Do not give in to the thought that war can solve problems and lead to peace. War is always a defeat, a shameful surrender to the forces of evil. Let us remember all the victims, whom we must never forget, and may this remembrance truly open us up to finding a way forward in the present on a path of reconciliation (30 August).

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Peace Treaty between Argentina and Chile, the Holy Father urged to ‘persevere at every moment with firm determination to the final consequences in an endeavour to resolve disputes with a real desire for dialogue and agreement, through patient negotiation and with the necessary compromises, always taking into account the just requirements and legitimate interests of all’ (25 November).

In this regard, how can one not refer to the many ongoing armed conflicts that remain unresolved, despite being the cause of immense suffering for the countries at war and for the entire human family.

Hope without tiring. ‘I know it is not easy to propose a new economy against a backdrop of new and old wars, while the arms industry prospers by taking resources away from the poor. Did you know that in some countries the most profitable investments are the manufacturing of arms? They profit by killing. In these cases, democracy is threatened, populism and inequality grow and the planet is increasingly wounded’. [...] So let us remember what Jesus told the disciples: ‘Do not be afraid. He will help you and the Church will not leave you alone’ (25 September). The Church must keep its doors open: ‘a Church that offers everyone an opening to the infinite and that knows how to look beyond. This is the Church that evangelises, that lives the joy of the Gospel and practices mercy’ (28 September).

The challenge of integral development requires fidelity. ‘Fidelity to God and fidelity to every man and woman. Indeed, such development concerns all persons in the physical, moral, cultural and socio-political aspects of their lives. Moreover, this type of development is contrary to all forms of oppression and rejection of others, and the Church denounces these abuses, committing itself above all to the conversion of each of her members, each one of us, to justice and to truth. In this sense, integral development calls us to holiness, to the vocation of a just and happy life’ (28 September).

At the opening the second session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, the Holy Father called for ‘open hearts, hearts in dialogue’. A heart that is closed in personal convictions is not proper to the Spirit of the Lord. It is not of the Lord. It is a gift to open oneself, and this gift must be combined, when necessary, with the ability to relax our muscles and bend down to offer each other a welcoming embrace and a place of refuge’ in order “to think more openly and to move forward more decisively” (*Homily, 2 October*). And in the final greeting, he outlined the path of solidarity, not only ‘dream of peace, but commit ourselves with all our might so that, even if we don’t say much about synodality, peace may be achieved through processes of listening, dialogue and reconciliation. The synodal Church for mission now needs the words we have shared to be backed up by deeds’ (26 October). At the Synod of the Syro-Malankara Church, the Pope quoted

a saying of the Orthodox Metropolitan John Zizioulas on Christian unity: 'I know the date when there will be full unity between the Churches. What is the date? 'The day after the Last Judgement'. He added: 'But in the meantime we must walk together, pray together and work together. All together' (11 November). The Pope repeated this to the Methodists, explaining that it is the Heart of Jesus that works the transformation when it touches our hearts (16 December). It is the Holy Spirit 'the agent of the synodal process! It is He who opens up individuals and communities to listening; it is He who makes dialogue authentic and fruitful; it is He who enlightens discernment; it is He who guides choices and decisions. And it is He, above all, who creates harmony, communion in the Church' (11 November). He has also encouraged Vatican employees: 'If someone has some particular difficulty, please talk about it, tell the heads, because we want to solve all difficulties, and this is done with dialogue, not with shouting, and not with keeping quiet' (21 December).

The hope of a fraternal world is not an ideology, it is not an economic system, it is not technological progress. The hope of a fraternal world is Him, the incarnate Son, sent by the Father so that we may all become what we are, that is, children of the Father who is in heaven, and therefore brothers and sisters among ourselves (31 December).

The Mediterranean Sea

Echoing Giorgio La Pira, Pope Francis has directed particular attention towards the Mediterranean Sea likening it to a new Lake Tiberias: 'We are all pilgrims of hope, walking in search of the truth, living our faith and building peace - because peace needs to be built! God loves every man; He makes no differences among us. The fraternity between the five shores of the Mediterranean that you are establishing is the answer – really it's an answer! -the best answer we can offer to the conflicts and the deadly indifferences [...]. Just like in a great lake of Tiberias that is now entrusted to your care, you inhabit the shores of this sea that connects you - the Mediterranean connects you! It gathers you just like in a beautiful garden that you are called to cultivate' (17 September).

In the video message for the inauguration of the 2024-2025 academic year of the Theological Faculty of Palermo, the Holy Father spoke of Sicily as the 'place where different cultures, histories and different faces meet in harmony, and commit theology to fostering dialogue with the sister Churches of the East that also overlook the Mediterranean', explaining that 'the route of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, difficult though it may be, is that of re-proposing and supporting, through experiences of encounter, experiences also of exchange and collaboration, listening jointly to the Holy Spirit. It is the legacy of many martyrs of dialogue in

the Mediterranean' with the mission to be 'a laboratory for a theology of ecumenical dialogue and a theology of religions, leading to a theology of interreligious dialogue. Always the word dialogue, dialogue, openness. [...] the Mediterranean needs a living theology, one that cultivates its contextual dimension to the full, becoming an appeal to all' (16 October).

'Be creative in fraternity' is the mandate given by the Pope to the "San Paolo" Theological Institute in Catania: '...this commitment will be more fruitful if you know how to engage in dialogue with the cultures and religions of the other Mediterranean peoples, who look to the future with hope. Please, let us not extinguish the hope of the poor, of those poor who are the migrants! And you are welcoming towards migrants. Integrate migrants. For you, also the challenge of Muslim migrants: how to integrate them and help them to enter the dioceses' (6 December).

Sport

In his message to the athletes in the occasion of the Olympic Games in Paris, the Pope writes: "Sport is a universal language that transcends borders, languages, races, nationalities and religions; it has the capacity to unite people, to encourage dialogue and mutual acceptance; it stimulates the surpassing of oneself, forms in the spirit of sacrifice, fosters loyalty in interpersonal relations; it invites people to recognize their own limits and the value of others. (27 June)

Popular piety and secularity

In his message to the Congress of Fraternities in Seville, the Pope stressed the relationship between fraternity and popular piety, between pilgrimage, procession and life, as a way of showing the people we have met (to whom we have shown the beauty of Jesus, of his Church, of his mad love) the way to return to God (9 May).

During his pastoral visit to Ajaccio, the Pope spoke at the closing session of the congress on popular religiosity in the Mediterranean, reassessing popular piety which, "by expressing faith through simple gestures and a symbolic language rooted in the culture of the people, [...] reveals God's presence in the living flesh of history, strengthens the relationship with the Church and often becomes an occasion for encounter, cultural exchange and celebration. [...] Its practices give life to the relationship with the Lord and to the content of faith". In the same context, Francis invites to nurture a "healthy secularity, [which] ensures that political activity does not manipulate religion, while the practice of religion remains free from a politics of self-interests, which at times is barely compatible with, it not downright contrary to, religious belief", so to have an open dialogue, frank and fruitful (15 December).

Dans ce volume

Le volume 177 de *Pro Dialogo* présente, dans l'ordre chronologique, les principaux enseignements sur le dialogue interreligieux et les thèmes connexes que le pape François a offerts au cours de l'année 2024.

Paix

Dans son discours au Corps Diplomatique, le pape a dénoncé l'affaiblissement de la diplomatie multilatérale et la nécessité de retrouver l'esprit et les valeurs qui ont marqué l'émergence des organisations internationales après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, réaffirmant la centralité du dialogue interreligieux, de la liberté religieuse et du respect des minorités. Plus de 360 millions de chrétiens dans le monde subissent des discriminations et des persécutions, et de plus en plus sont contraints de fuir leurs terres (*8 janvier*). Ils risquent maintenant de perdre également leur identité religieuse, et avec le passage des générations, le patrimoine spirituel de l'Orient s'affaiblit, un trésor inestimable pour l'Église catholique (*27 juin*). La diplomatie doit être infatigable dans la poursuite de la paix (*9 mai*). Pour garantir une paix durable, nous devons revenir à reconnaître notre humanité commune et placer la fraternité au centre de la vie des peuples (*10 mai*). Une politique capable de façonner un projet commun pour la famille humaine, maintenant et à l'avenir, est nécessaire (*14 juin*).

Ne cessons pas de rêver de la paix, qui nous donne la joie inattendue de nous sentir partie de l'unique famille humaine. Au lieu de nous illusionner que la guerre puisse résoudre les problèmes et apporter la paix, nous devons être vigilants et critiques envers une idéologie aujourd'hui malheureusement dominante, qui soutient que le conflit, la violence et la rupture font partie du fonctionnement normal d'une société. L'enjeu réel réside dans les luttes de pouvoir entre les différents groupes sociaux, les intérêts économiques partisans et les manœuvres de politique internationale qui visent une paix apparente mais fuient les problèmes réels (*7 juin*). Il faut des artisans de paix qui s'opposent à la logique implacable et obstinée de l'affrontement et sachent ouvrir des voies pacifiques de rencontre et de dialogue (*7 juin*). Cela vaut particulièrement pour les diplomates (*8 juin*).

Rappelant que la communauté internationale ne peut renoncer à son devoir de rechercher la paix en promouvant le dialogue, la réconciliation, la compréhension mutuelle, le respect de la dignité et des droits de chaque individu et peuple, ainsi que les exigences du droit international, le pape a invité un groupe

d'ambassadeurs nouvellement accrédités à œuvrer avec courage et créativité dans la promotion de liens d'amitié, de coopération et de dialogue au service de la paix (7 décembre).

“Nous devons éviter que les religions cèdent à la tentation de devenir un moyen d'alimenter des formes de nationalisme, d'ethnocentrisme et de populisme..... Malheur à ceux qui cherchent à entraîner Dieu à prendre parti dans les guerres !” (17 septembre).

Les juifs et les catholiques doivent coopérer pour la paix et la justice en Terre Sainte (2 février). Les déserts de la haine peuvent faire germer l'espoir dans les cœurs des individus et des peuples, si nous apprenons à marcher dans le respect mutuel, et cela vaut aussi pour les chrétiens du Moyen-Orient (12 avril). Le dialogue est la seule voie vers la paix, vers la rencontre avec l'autre. Les jeunes peuvent être de grands artisans de paix à travers le dialogue (25 novembre).

La bonté, la confiance et l'amour peuvent faire mûrir une société basée sur des “relations d'attention” à l'exemple de Jésus et faire de la maison commune un lieu de fraternité (19 avril). “Écoute, rêve, agis !” est aussi l'invitation à lutter contre la traite des êtres humains (8 février).

La réparation exige la reconnaissance de la faute et la demande de pardon (4 mai). Le pardon est l'objet du Message pour la Journée mondiale de la Paix 2025, publié comme d'habitude le 8 décembre. L'appel au désarmement et à la remise de la dette des pays pauvres en constitue le cœur. Mais l'invitation à pardonner toujours vaut surtout pour les ministres de la réconciliation et pour les consacrés (*Angélus*, 15 décembre).

Une présence qui favorise des paroles et des gestes de paix, de fraternité et de respect, invite à la raison, à la réconciliation, à surmonter avec bonne volonté les divisions et les inimitiés stratifiées et durcies dans le temps, qui deviennent de plus en plus inextricables (28 août). Être des experts “constructeurs de paix” (cf. Mt 5,9), signifie créer des occasions de rencontre, médier la résolution des conflits, rapprocher les personnes et promouvoir une culture de la réconciliation, même dans les situations les plus difficiles (31 août).

Même dans le monde de la finance, pour résoudre la crise de la dette des pays pauvres, il est essentiel de penser à une nouvelle architecture financière internationale, courageuse et créative, et d'agir de bonne foi et avec vérité, suivant un code de conduite international avec des standards éthiques qui puissent guider le dialogue entre les parties (5 juin).

Dialogue de la charité et de la vérité, amitié

Le pape François a expliqué que le dialogue de la charité est une “théologie en action” car il ouvre de nouveaux horizons à nos Églises en vue de la pleine

communion avec les Églises orientales (*12 et 26 janvier*), souhaitant que les fruits du dialogue théologique soient reçus dans les communautés et les lieux de formation (*28 juin*). L'Esprit Saint ouvre de nouvelles voies et conduit à la vérité (*2 mai*), accompagnés par le Dieu de l'espérance (*20 juin*). L'Église catholique et l'Église orthodoxe doivent continuer leur chemin vers l'unité avec la méthode synodale de l'écoute sans condamner (*30 novembre*).

Le dialogue théologique est indispensable dans notre chemin vers l'unité, car l'unité à laquelle nous aspirons est l'unité dans la foi, tandis que le dialogue de la vérité ne doit jamais être séparé du dialogue de la charité et du dialogue de la vie. De cette manière, c'est un dialogue complet et humain (*9 novembre*). La théologie doit raviver l'espérance, en plaçant le Christ au centre avec persévérance, sagesse et prévoyance, en dialogue avec tous les autres domaines du savoir (*28 novembre*). Lors du congrès sur l'avenir de la théologie, organisé par le Dicastère pour la Culture et l'Éducation, le pape a invité à garder les portes ouvertes aux personnes en crise, qui "ressentent le besoin de renouveler leur recherche, même à tâtons, peut-être avec une aide. La théologie peut être un guide dans ce voyage !" (*9 décembre*).

Service, mission et joie sont les thèmes développés par le Saint-Père dans la cathédrale de Luxembourg, avec l'invitation à relever le défi d'une Église qui doit évoluer, mûrir et grandir au sein d'une société sécularisée (*26 septembre*). L'équilibre et l'hospitalité de la culture luxembourgeoise ont surpris le Saint-Père ! (*29 septembre*).

Le soin apporté au dialogue interculturel et interreligieux est le moyen de promouvoir la compréhension mutuelle, la coopération et la construction de ponts entre des traditions, des cultures et des visions du monde différentes (*20 mai*), comme le pape l'a également rappelé aux bouddhistes thaïlandais (*27 mai*). Le dialogue interreligieux est une condition nécessaire pour la paix dans le monde, et donc un devoir pour les chrétiens et les autres communautés religieuses (*3 juin*). À la Conférence interreligieuse du Kerala, il a rappelé que comme disciples de nos traditions religieuses respectives, nous devrions toujours coopérer avec toutes les personnes de bonne volonté pour promouvoir une culture de respect, de dignité, de compassion, de réconciliation et de solidarité fraternelle (*30 novembre*).

Le facteur religieux, par nature, ne doit pas être instrumentalisé, mais devrait contribuer à atténuer l'âpreté des conflits et à créer un espace pour garantir à tous les droits de citoyenneté, dans des conditions d'égalité et sans discrimination (*7 août*). La communication doit également encourager l'inclusion, le dialogue et la recherche de la paix (*31 octobre*). Il s'agit de développer la capacité d'écoute et l'art du dialogue, qui sont naturellement ancrés dans une vie de prière, où l'on entre en dialogue avec le Seigneur, en s'arrêtant à sa présence pour apprendre de Lui l'art de l'amour qui se donne, afin que peu à peu notre existence entre en harmonie avec le cœur du Maître (*1 août*).

Lors de sa visite pastorale à Ajaccio, le Saint-Père a expliqué que le moyen le plus efficace d'évangélisation est "prendre soin des autres : de ceux qui suivent l'enseignement de Jésus, de ceux qui se sont éloignés de Lui, de ceux qui ont besoin d'être remis sur le bon chemin ou de trouver du réconfort dans leurs souffrances. Prendre soin de tous, dans la formation et surtout dans la rencontre. Rencontrer les personnes là où elles vivent et travaillent est important" (15 décembre).

Université, éducation et dialogue

La spécificité missionnaire et interculturelle des institutions académiques doit éduquer à savoir transmettre le message chrétien en contact avec d'autres cultures et religions (30 août). L'Université, si elle veut être un lieu et un instrument de la mission de l'Église, doit élaborer des savoirs générés par Dieu, éprouvés dans le dialogue avec l'humanité, en abandonnant l'approche du "nous et les autres". Le pape fait une comparaison entre l'échange de livres et l'échange d'idées, qui enrichit vraiment ceux qui en sont les protagonistes : "L'Université est un lieu de dialogue. Essayons d'imaginer deux étudiants qui arrivent chacun avec un livre, qu'ils échangent ensuite. Chacun rentrera chez lui avec un seul livre, mais si ces étudiants échangent une réflexion ou une idée en partant, chacun rentrera avec une réflexion ou une idée de plus. Mais ce n'est pas seulement une question de quantité : chacun sera redevable à l'autre, chacun fera partie de l'autre" (5 novembre).

En particulier, les polyglottes, en plus de leur capacité à comprendre et à parler plusieurs langues, ont tendance à avoir des capacités analytiques plus affinées, de meilleures compétences communicationnelles et sociales, et une plus grande aptitude au discernement. En ce sens, ils sont mieux équipés pour apprécier la richesse d'autres cultures, même très éloignées de la leur (9 septembre). "La culture entendue comme soin de soi doit impliquer le soin des autres. Il n'y a pas de conflit entre étudiants et professeurs. Il y a dialogue. Parfois, il est plus intense, mais il y a dialogue, et le dialogue permet à la communauté universitaire de grandir" (28 septembre).

"J'ai souvent répété un proverbe africain qui dit qu'il faut tout un village pour éduquer un enfant. Efforçons-nous donc de construire ce 'village éducatif', où travailler ensemble pour promouvoir des relations humaines positives et culturellement fécondes. À travers ces relations étroites, une alliance éducative peut certainement naître entre tous ceux qui travaillent pour la croissance personnelle des individus dans ses divers aspects scientifiques, politiques, artistiques, sportifs et autres. L'éducation n'est pas un processus qui se termine une fois sorti de la salle de classe ou de la bibliothèque, mais continue tout au long de la vie, dans les rencontres quotidiennes avec les autres et dans les chemins que nous empruntons. Écouter l'autre, réfléchir au dialogue : c'est la voie de l'éducation" (9 novembre).

"Éduquer, c'est aider à bien penser, à bien sentir et à bien faire. Les trois lan-

gages : le langage du cœur - bien sentir - le langage de la tête - bien penser - et le langage des mains - bien faire. Mais tous en harmonie : faire ce que l'on sent et ce que l'on pense ; sentir ce que l'on pense et ce que l'on fait ; penser ce que l'on sent et ce que l'on fait. Ces trois langages, unis, tous ensemble" (21 novembre).

Harmonie

À Jakarta, en Indonésie, terre d'harmonie, le pape a réaffirmé que l'harmonie dans la diversité se réalise lorsque les perspectives particulières tiennent compte des exigences communes à tous et lorsque chaque groupe ethnique et chaque confession religieuse agissent dans un esprit de fraternité, poursuivant le noble objectif de servir le bien de tous. La conscience de participer à une histoire partagée, où la solidarité est essentielle et les contributions sont de tous, aide à identifier les bonnes solutions, à éviter l'exacerbation des conflits et à transformer l'opposition en une coopération efficace. Au clergé, toujours à Jakarta, le pape a donné un message qui vaut pour tous : "*Foi, Fraternité, Compassion* sont les vertus qui expriment bien à la fois votre chemin en tant qu'Église et votre caractère en tant que peuple, qui est ethniquement et culturellement divers. En même temps, vous êtes caractérisés par un engagement inné pour l'unité et la coexistence pacifique, comme en témoignent les principes traditionnels de la *Pancasila*" (4 septembre). Les responsables religieux, en particulier, inspirés par leurs récits et traditions spirituelles respectifs, devraient collaborer pour répondre aux crises environnementales, en identifiant leurs causes et en adoptant les actions appropriées (5 septembre). Les valeurs spirituelles influencent considérablement la construction de la cité terrestre et de toutes les réalités temporelles. En d'autres termes, ces valeurs insufflent une âme, inspirent et renforcent chaque projet (7 septembre).

À plusieurs reprises, lors de son voyage apostolique en Indonésie, en Papouasie, au Timor et à Singapour, le pape a exhorté à rêver de fraternité, à semer des graines d'amour, à parcourir avec confiance le chemin du dialogue, à continuer à montrer bonté et gentillesse (5 et 9 septembre), à diffuser le parfum du Christ et de l'Évangile, un parfum qui enrichit la vie et nous remplit de joie plus que le bois de santal du Timor (10 septembre).

Le pape François a loué à Singapour l'engagement pour le développement durable et la sauvegarde de la création avec la recherche de solutions innovantes pour faire face aux défis environnementaux, ce qui peut encourager d'autres pays à faire de même. "Singapour est un exemple lumineux de ce que l'humanité peut accomplir en travaillant ensemble dans l'harmonie, avec un sens des responsabilités et un esprit d'inclusion et de fraternité. Cela résume votre attitude : travailler

ensemble, dans l'harmonie, avec un sens des responsabilités et dans un esprit de fraternité et d'inclusion" (12 septembre).

En inaugurant le tunnel de l'amitié, qui relie la Mosquée et la Cathédrale à Jakarta, le pape a rappelé la "mystique" de vivre ensemble, de se mêler, de se rencontrer, de se prendre dans les bras, de se soutenir, de participer à cette marée un peu chaotique qui peut se transformer en une véritable expérience de fraternité, en une caravane solidaire, en un saint pèlerinage (5 septembre).

Aux jeunes lors de la rencontre interreligieuse à Singapour, il a comparé les religions à des langues, comme des chemins pour atteindre Dieu : "Il y a un seul Dieu, et les religions sont comme des langues, des chemins pour atteindre Dieu. Certains sikhs, certains musulmans, certains hindous, certains chrétiens. Comprenez-vous ? Pourtant, le dialogue interreligieux entre les jeunes demande du courage. L'âge de la jeunesse est l'âge du courage, mais on peut abuser de ce courage pour faire des choses qui ne nous aideront pas. Vous devriez plutôt avoir le courage d'aller de l'avant et de dialoguer" (13 septembre). De même, en encourageant les jeunes Italiens à s'engager dans les institutions publiques, le pape affirme que "dans la vie, il faut aussi traverser des conflits. Il faut avoir la patience de les transformer en capacité d'écoute, de reconnaissance de l'autre, de croissance ensemble. Chercher à surmonter les conflits est un signe que nous avons visé plus haut, plus haut que notre intérêt personnel, pour sortir des sables mouvants de l'inimitié sociale" (16 novembre).

Fraternité universelle et soin de la "maison commune"

À plusieurs reprises, le Saint-Père a développé le message de l'encyclique *Fratelli tutti*, dénonçant l'égoïsme qui empêche de surmonter les barrières géographiques et la distance (25 janvier). Cinq ans après la signature du Document sur la fraternité humaine à Abou Dhabi, le voyage continue, mais les dévastations environnementales et la dégradation sociale ne cessent de susciter des inquiétudes. Il est nécessaire de changer la perception de l'autre dans les publications, les discours et l'enseignement (4 février), pour marcher dans le respect de la diversité, l'engagement pour la "maison commune" et la promotion de la paix (4 avril). Le témoignage de fraternité entre chrétiens, juifs et musulmans est indispensable et précieux (26 juin). Comme en famille, le dialogue entre croyants de religions différentes fait précisément cela : il nous permet de sortir de nos schémas familiaux de pensée et d'action et de nous ouvrir à la rencontre avec la grande famille humaine. Mais pour que le dialogue soit fructueux, il doit répondre à plusieurs conditions : il doit être ouvert, sincère, respectueux, amical et concret (20 novembre).

Le pape a remercié une délégation de jâins pour leurs efforts dans la recherche commune de moyens de prendre soin de la terre, des pauvres et des plus vul-

nécessaires dans la société, qui nécessitent des initiatives entreprises avec sérieux et engagement, ainsi qu'avec un sens de la responsabilité partagée (25 novembre).

La parabole du Bon Samaritain enseigne comment reconstruire la communauté à partir de la vulnérabilité des autres, envers lesquels on se comporte comme un prochain (11 avril). Cela signifie marcher ensemble, s'écouter, dialoguer, même se disputer, mais toujours en communauté (25 mai).

Le soin de la nature, la justice pour les pauvres, l'engagement pour la société, la protection de la vie et de la famille, la défense de la dignité de chaque vie humaine et la paix extérieure et intérieure appartiennent à une seule réalité (29 mai).

Comme signes concrets d'attention à la promotion de la conversion écologique, le Pontife Romain a voulu une installation agrivoltaïque à Santa Maria di Galeria (Rome) pour couvrir les besoins énergétiques de l'État de la Cité du Vatican avec de l'énergie "verte" (28 juin), et a créé le "Borgo Laudato si" à Castel Gandolfo, connecté au Centre de Hautes Études du même nom également voulu par lui pour mettre en œuvre l'encyclique *Laudato si'* (19 septembre).

Dans le même esprit, il faut comprendre l'invitation adressée aux mouvements populaires : "Notre chemin continue de rêver et de travailler ensemble pour que tous les travailleurs aient des droits, toutes les familles aient un toit, tous les paysans aient une terre, tous les enfants aient une éducation, tous les jeunes aient un avenir, tous les aînés aient une bonne retraite, toutes les femmes aient des droits égaux, tous les peuples aient une souveraineté, tous les indigènes aient un territoire, tous les migrants soient accueillis, tous les groupes ethniques soient respectés, toutes les religions soient libres, toutes les régions aient la paix, tous les écosystèmes soient protégés. C'est un chemin permanent, il y aura des progrès et des reculs, des erreurs et des succès, mais n'ayez aucun doute : c'est la bonne voie" (20 septembre).

Le Saint-Siège soutient les efforts de la communauté internationale, en particulier dans le domaine de l'éducation à l'écologie intégrale et de la sensibilisation à l'environnement comme un problème humain et social à plusieurs niveaux (13 novembre).

La vision de la nature, dans son intégralité, comme un don de Dieu, nous invite à réfléchir à notre responsabilité envers la maison commune. Le dialogue entre science et foi peut et doit exister : toutes deux sont en effet appelées à guider notre compréhension du monde (23 octobre).

Intelligence artificielle

À plusieurs reprises, le pape a souligné le risque que l'intelligence artificielle puisse renforcer le paradigme technocratique et la culture du gaspillage, aggraver les disparités entre les pays développés et les pays en développement et déléguer à une machine des décisions essentielles pour la vie humaine (22 juin). Les richesses cul-

tuelles des peuples et des religions doivent guider l'innovation technologique (10 juillet). Il faut reconnaître et prévenir les risques des applications manipulatrices de l'intelligence artificielle pour façonner l'opinion publique, influencer les choix des consommateurs et interférer avec les processus électoraux (23 septembre). Le choix à faire est entre manipuler la nature ou en prendre soin. Et nous devons commencer par notre nature humaine, y compris les questions d'eugénisme, d'organismes cybernétiques et d'intelligence artificielle. Mais le choix entre manipuler ou cultiver concerne aussi notre vie intérieure (28 septembre).

Aux centres de recherche de nos universités, le pape a demandé d'étudier l'actuelle "révolution technologique" pour éclairer ses bénéfices et ses dangers (21 novembre). Mais s'il est vrai que le paradigme technocratique reste dominant, il faut une nouvelle culture, capable de faire place à une éthique, une culture et une spiritualité, qui soient solidement ancrées (3 juin), une culture qui élargit les frontières et évite le "sectarisme", ou l'exaltation de soi au-dessus des autres. Une culture immergée comme un bon "levain" dans notre monde, qui contribue au bien commun de l'humanité (27 septembre).

Foi et culture en Europe

En Europe, les communautés ecclésiales et civiles doivent découvrir des moyens d'exprimer leur foi et leur culture avec une fidélité créative à leurs riches traditions. De cette manière, elles pourront contribuer à la construction d'une Europe faite de peuples vivant en harmonie, les uns à côté des autres, conservant leurs particularités, mais ouverts à la rencontre et au dialogue avec les autres cultures de notre monde (11 juin), dans le contexte d'une relation correcte entre religion et société (7 juillet).

L'Europe a besoin de pays comme la Belgique pour continuer à parcourir le chemin de la paix et de la fraternité entre ses peuples. Lorsque les nations ne respectent pas les frontières ou violent les traités en invoquant les excuses les plus variées et insoutenables, et lorsqu'elles utilisent les armes pour remplacer le droit réel par le principe du 'la force fait le droit', alors elles ouvrent la boîte de Pandore, déclenchant des tempêtes violentes qui s'abattent sur la maison, menaçant de la détruire (27 septembre).

Synodalité, espérance, développement intégral

Les hommes et les femmes synodaux ont développé la capacité de s'engager dans le dialogue, de se relier, de chercher ensemble. En ce sens, ils sont des pèlerins d'espérance (25 avril). L'espérance n'est pas une émotion ou un sentiment, mais la personne même de Jésus (10 mai). Par la pratique du discernement, qui est personnelle et orientée vers la vérité, l'Église accompagne nos frères et sœurs

dans la foi, pour marcher ensemble, pas seuls, et ainsi notre croissance intérieure s'enrichit considérablement. En ce sens, le discernement est synodal. Les jeunes doivent être responsabilisés, impliqués dans le dialogue, dans les activités de planification et dans les décisions (*25 mai*). Pour eux, il est important de voir des modèles d'espérance et d'idéalisme qui contrastent avec les messages de pessimisme et de cynisme auxquels ils sont si souvent exposés. La guerre n'est pas espérance ; la guerre ne donne pas d'espérance. L'engagement pour le bien commun, soutenu par la confiance dans les promesses du Christ, doit être un exemple pour nos jeunes (*24 août*).

« Vivez comme des pèlerins d'espérance. Avec courage, ne vous laissez pas de rêver de paix juste et de fraternité, car c'est aussi le rêve du Père : que ses enfants soient unis et heureux, se reconnaissant comme frères et sœurs. Regardez au-delà de la nuit ! Ne cédez pas à l'idée que la guerre puisse résoudre les problèmes et apporter la paix. La guerre est toujours une défaite, une honteuse reddition aux forces du mal. Souvenons-nous de toutes les victimes, que nous ne devons jamais oublier, et que ce souvenir nous ouvre vraiment à trouver un chemin de réconciliation dans le présent » (*30 août*).

En commémorant le 40e anniversaire du Traité de paix entre l'Argentine et le Chili, le Saint-Père a exhorté à persévérer à tout moment avec une ferme détermination jusqu'aux dernières conséquences dans la tentative de résoudre les différends avec un réel désir de dialogue et d'accord, à travers une négociation patiente et les compromis nécessaires, en tenant toujours compte des justes exigences et des intérêts légitimes de tous (*25 novembre*).

À cet égard, comment ne pas évoquer les nombreux conflits armés en cours qui restent encore non résolus, bien qu'ils soient la cause d'immenses souffrances pour les pays en guerre et pour toute la famille humaine.

Espérer sans se lasser. « Je sais qu'il n'est pas facile de proposer une nouvelle économie dans un contexte de guerres nouvelles et anciennes, alors que l'industrie des armes prospère en détournant des ressources des pauvres. Saviez-vous que dans certains pays, les investissements les plus rentables sont la production d'armes ? On gagne de l'argent en tuant. Dans ces cas, la démocratie est menacée, le populisme et les inégalités augmentent, et la planète est de plus en plus blessée [...] Rappelons alors ce que Jésus a dit aux disciples : « N'ayez pas peur. » Il vous aidera et l'Église ne vous laissera pas seuls » (*25 septembre*). L'Église doit garder les portes ouvertes : une Église qui offre à tous une ouverture sur l'infini et qui sait regarder au-delà. C'est l'Église qui évangélise, qui vit la joie de l'Évangile et pratique la miséricorde (*28 septembre*).

Le défi du développement intégral exige la fidélité. « Fidélité à Dieu et fidélité à chaque homme et femme. En effet, ce développement concerne toutes les personnes dans les aspects physiques, moraux, culturels et socio-politiques de leur vie.

De plus, ce type de développement est contraire à toutes les formes d'oppression et de rejet des autres, et l'Église dénonce ces abus, s'engageant surtout dans la conversion de chacun de ses membres, de chacun de nous, à la justice et à la vérité. En ce sens, le développement intégral nous appelle à la sainteté, à la vocation d'une vie juste et heureuse" (28 septembre).

En ouverture de la deuxième session de la XVIe Assemblée générale du Synode des Évêques, le Saint-Père a invité à "avoir des cœurs ouverts, des cœurs en dialogue. Un cœur fermé dans ses convictions personnelles n'est pas propre à l'Esprit du Seigneur. Ce n'est pas du Seigneur. C'est un don de s'ouvrir, et ce don doit être uni, quand c'est nécessaire, à la capacité de relâcher les muscles et de se pencher pour offrir à l'autre une étreinte accueillante et un lieu de refuge" pour "penser plus ouvertement et avancer avec plus de détermination" (*Homélie, 2 octobre*). Et dans son salut final, il traça le chemin solidaire, non seulement comme "rêver de la paix, mais nous engager de toutes nos forces pour que, même si nous ne parlons pas beaucoup de synodalité, la paix puisse être atteinte à travers des processus d'écoute, de dialogue et de réconciliation. L'Église synodale pour la mission a besoin que les mots que nous avons partagés soient soutenus par des actes" (26 octobre).

Au Synode de l'Église syro-malankare, le pape a rapporté une parole du métropolite orthodoxe Jean Zizioulas sur l'unité des chrétiens : "Je connais la date à laquelle il y aura la pleine unité entre les Églises. Quelle est cette date ? 'Le lendemain du Jugement dernier.'" Et il ajouta : "Mais en attendant, nous devons marcher ensemble, prier ensemble et travailler ensemble. Tous ensemble" (11 novembre). Il l'a répété aux méthodistes, expliquant que c'est le Cœur de Jésus qui opère la transformation, quand Il touche notre cœur (16 décembre). C'est l'Esprit Saint "l'agent du processus synodal !... C'est Lui qui ouvre les personnes et les communautés à l'écoute ; c'est Lui qui rend le dialogue authentique et fructueux ; c'est Lui qui éclaire le discernement ; c'est Lui qui guide les choix et les décisions. Et c'est Lui, surtout, qui crée l'harmonie, la communion dans l'Église" (11 novembre). Il a également encouragé ceux qui travaillent au Vatican : "Si quelqu'un a une difficulté particulière, il est prié d'en parler, de le dire aux supérieurs, car nous voulons résoudre toutes les difficultés, et cela se fait par le dialogue, par le dialogue, pas par les cris, ni par le silence" (21 décembre).

L'espérance d'un monde fraternel n'est pas une idéologie, ni un système économique, ni le progrès technique. L'espérance d'un monde fraternel, c'est Lui, le Fils incarné, envoyé par le Père afin que nous puissions tous devenir ce que nous sommes, c'est-à-dire des enfants du Père qui est aux cieux, et donc des frères et sœurs les uns des autres (31 décembre).

Méditerranée

Faisant écho à Giorgio La Pira, le pape François manifeste une attention particulière à la Méditerranée comme nouveau lac de Tibériade : “Nous sommes tous des pèlerins d’espérance, qui marchons à la recherche de la vérité, vivant notre foi et construisant la paix - car la paix doit être construite ! Dieu aime chaque homme, Il ne fait pas de différences entre nous. La fraternité entre les cinq rives de la Méditerranée que vous établissez est la réponse - vraiment une réponse ! - la meilleure réponse que nous puissions donner aux conflits et aux indifférences mortelles [...] Comme dans un grand lac de Tibériade qui est maintenant confié à vos soins, vous habitez les rives de cette mer qui vous unit - la Méditerranée vous unit ! Elle vous rassemble comme dans un beau jardin que vous êtes appelés à cultiver” (17 septembre).

Dans son message vidéo pour l’inauguration de l’année académique 2024-2025 de la Faculté de Théologie de Palerme, le Saint-Père a parlé de la Sicile comme du “lieu où les cultures, les histoires et les visages différents se rencontrent en harmonie, et engage la théologie à favoriser le dialogue avec les Églises sœurs d’Orient qui se trouvent également sur la Méditerranée”, expliquant que “le chemin du dialogue œcuménique et interreligieux, aussi difficile soit-il, est celui de proposer et de soutenir, à travers des expériences de rencontres, également des expériences d’échange et de collaboration, l’écoute commune de l’Esprit Saint. C’est l’héritage de nombreux martyrs du dialogue en Méditerranée” avec la mission d’être “un laboratoire d’une théologie du dialogue œcuménique et d’une théologie des religions, qui mène à une théologie du dialogue interreligieux. Toujours le mot dialogue, dialogue, ouverture [...] la Méditerranée a besoin d’une théologie vivante, qui cultive pleinement sa dimension contextuelle, devenant un appel pour tous” (16 octobre).

“Être créatifs dans la fraternité” est le mandat confié par le pape à l’Institut Théologique “San Paolo” de Catane : “Votre engagement sera plus fructueux si vous savez dialoguer avec les cultures et les religions des autres peuples de la Méditerranée, qui regardent vers l’avenir avec espérance. S’il vous plaît, n’éteignons pas l’espérance des pauvres, de ces pauvres qui sont les migrants ! Et vous êtes accueillants envers les migrants. Intégrez les migrants. Pour vous, aussi, le défi des migrants musulmans : comment les intégrer et les aider à entrer dans les diocèses” (6 décembre).

Sport

Dans son message aux athlètes pour les Jeux Olympiques de Paris, le pape écrit que “le sport est un langage universel qui transcende les frontières, les langues, les races, les nationalités et les religions ; il a la capacité d’unir les gens, de favoriser

le dialogue et l'acceptation mutuelle ; il stimule le dépassement de soi, forme à l'esprit de sacrifice, favorise la loyauté dans les relations interpersonnelles ; il invite à reconnaître ses propres limites et la valeur des autres" (27 juin).

Piété populaire et sécularité

Dans son message envoyé au Congrès des confréries à Séville, le pape souligna la relation entre fraternité et piété populaire, entre pèlerinage, procession et vie, comme une indication du chemin aux personnes que nous avons rencontrées, à qui nous avons montré la beauté de Jésus, de son Église, de cet amour fou, pour revenir à Dieu (9 mai).

Lors de sa visite pastorale à Ajaccio, le pape est intervenu à la clôture du Congrès sur la religiosité populaire en Méditerranée, laquelle, "exprimant la foi à travers des gestes simples et un langage symbolique enraciné dans la culture du peuple, [...] révèle la présence de Dieu dans la chair vive de l'histoire, renforce la relation avec l'Église et devient souvent une occasion de rencontres, d'échanges culturels et de fête [...] Ses pratiques donnent vie à la relation avec le Seigneur et aux contenus de la foi". Dans le même contexte, François invita à cultiver une "saine laïcité, [qui] garantit que l'activité politique ne manipule pas la religion, tandis que la pratique religieuse reste libre d'une politique d'intérêts personnels, qui est parfois difficilement compatible avec la croyance religieuse, sinon même contraire à celle-ci", pour un dialogue ouvert, franc et fructueux (15 décembre).

In questo volume

Il volume 177 di *Pro Dialogo* presenta in ordine cronologico i principali insegnamenti sul dialogo interreligioso e temi connessi, che papa Francesco ha offerto nel corso dell'anno 2024.

Pace

Nel discorso al Corpo Diplomatico, il papa ha denunciato l'indebolimento della diplomazia multilaterale e la necessità di recuperare lo spirito e i valori che hanno segnato il sorgere delle organizzazioni internazionali nel secondo dopoguerra, ribadendo la centralità del dialogo interreligioso, della libertà religiosa e del rispetto delle minoranze. Più di 360 milioni di cristiani nel mondo patiscono discriminazioni e persecuzioni, e sempre più sono costretti a fuggire dalle loro terre (8 gennaio). Ora rischiano di perdere anche la loro identità religiosa e, con il passare delle generazioni, si indebolisce il patrimonio spirituale dell'Oriente, un tesoro inestimabile per la Chiesa cattolica (27 giugno). La diplomazia dev'essere instancabile nel perseguire la pace (9 maggio). Per garantire una pace duratura, dobbiamo tornare a riconoscere la nostra comune umanità e porre la fraternità al centro della vita dei popoli (10 maggio). È necessaria una politica capace di plasmare un progetto comune per la famiglia umana ora e in futuro (14 giugno).

Non smettiamo di sognare la pace, che ci dà la gioia inaspettata di sentirci parte dell'unica famiglia umana. Invece di illuderci che la guerra possa risolvere i problemi e portare la pace, dobbiamo essere vigili e critici nei confronti di un'ideologia oggi purtroppo dominante, che sostiene che il conflitto, la violenza e la rottura fanno parte del normale funzionamento di una società. La vera posta in gioco sono le lotte di potere tra i diversi gruppi sociali, gli interessi economici di parte e le manovre di politica internazionale che mirano a una pace apparente ma in fuga dai problemi reali (7 giugno). Servono operatori di pace che si oppongano alla logica implacabile e ostinata dello scontro e sappiano aprire vie pacifiche di incontro e di dialogo (7 giugno). Questo vale particolarmente per i diplomatici (8 giugno).

Ricordando che “la comunità internazionale non può rinunciare al suo dovere di ricercare la pace promuovendo il dialogo, la riconciliazione, la comprensione reciproca, il rispetto per la dignità e i diritti di ogni individuo e popolo e per le esigenze del diritto internazionale”, il papa ha invitato un gruppo di Ambasciatori

neo accreditati ad “operare con coraggio e creatività nella promozione di legami di amicizia, cooperazione e dialogo al servizio della pace” (7 dicembre).

“Dobbiamo evitare che le religioni cedano alla tentazione di diventare un mezzo per alimentare forme di nazionalismo, etnocentrismo e populismo [...]. Guai a chi cerca di trascinare Dio a schierarsi nelle guerre!” (17 settembre).

Ebrei e cattolici devono cooperare per la pace e la giustizia in Terra Santa (2 febbraio). I deserti dell’odio possono far germogliare la speranza nei cuori degli individui e dei popoli, se impariamo a camminare nel rispetto reciproco, e questo vale pure per i cristiani del medio Oriente (12 aprile). Il dialogo è l’unica via per la pace, per l’incontro con l’altro. I giovani possono essere grandi artigiani di pace attraverso il dialogo (25 novembre).

Bontà, fiducia e amore possono far maturare una società basata su “relazioni di cura” ad esempio di Gesù e fare della casa comune un luogo di fraternità (19 aprile). “Ascolta, sogna, agisci!” è anche l’invito a combattere il traffico di esseri umani (8 febbraio).

La riparazione esige il riconoscimento della colpa e la richiesta di perdono (4 maggio). Il perdono è oggetto del Messaggio per la giornata mondiale della Pace per il 2025, pubblicato come di consueto l’8 dicembre. L’appello al disarmo e alla remissione del debito dei Paesi poveri ne costituisce il cuore. Ma l’invito a perdonare sempre vale soprattutto per i ministri della riconciliazione e per i consacrati (Angelus, 15 dicembre)

Una presenza che favorisce parole e gesti di pace, fratellanza e rispetto, invita alla ragione, alla riconciliazione, a superare con la buona volontà le divisioni e le inimicizie stratificate e indurite nel tempo, che stanno diventando sempre più inestricabili (28 agosto). Essere esperti “costruttori di pace” (cfr. Mt 5,9), vuol dire creare occasioni di incontro, mediare la risoluzione dei conflitti, avvicinare le persone e promuovere una cultura della riconciliazione, anche nelle situazioni più difficili (31 agosto).

Anche nel mondo della finanza, per risolvere la crisi del debito dei Paesi poveri, è fondamentale pensare a una nuova architettura finanziaria internazionale, che sia coraggiosa e creativa, e agire in buona fede e con verità, seguendo un codice di condotta internazionale con standard etici che possano guidare il dialogo tra le parti (5 giugno).

Dialogo della carità e della verità, amicizia

Papa Francesco ha spiegato che il dialogo della carità è “teologia in azione” perché apre nuovi orizzonti alle nostre chiese in vista della piena comunione con le Chiese orientali (12 e 26 gennaio), auspicando che i frutti del dialogo teologico vengano recepiti nelle comunità e nei luoghi di formazione (28 giugno). Lo Spi-

rito Santo apre nuove strade e conduce alla verità (2 maggio), accompagnati dal Dio della speranza (20 giugno). Chiesa cattolica e ortodossa devono continuare il loro cammino verso l'unità con il metodo sinodale dell'ascoltare senza condannare (30 novembre).

Il dialogo teologico è indispensabile nel nostro cammino verso l'unità, poiché l'unità a cui aneliamo è l'unità nella fede, mentre il dialogo della verità non deve mai essere separato dal dialogo della carità e dal dialogo della vita. In questo modo, è un dialogo completo e umano" (9 novembre). La teologia deve riaccendere la speranza, mettendo Cristo al centro con perseveranza, sapienza e provvidenza, in dialogo con tutti gli altri campi del sapere (28 novembre). Al convegno sul futuro della teologia, organizzato dal Dicastero per la Cultura e l'Educazione, il papa ha invitato a tenere le porte aperte alle persone in crisi, che "sentono il bisogno di rinnovare la loro ricerca, anche se a tentoni, forse anche con un aiuto. La teologia può essere una guida nel viaggio!" (9 dicembre).

Servizio, missione e gioia sono i temi sviluppati dal Santo Padre nella cattedrale di Lussemburgo, con l'invito ad affrontare la sfida di una Chiesa che deve evolvere, maturare e crescere in seno a una società secolarizzata (26 settembre). L'equilibrio e l'ospitalità della cultura lussemburghese hanno colto di sorpresa il Santo Padre! (29 settembre).

La cura del dialogo interculturale e interreligioso è il mezzo per promuovere la comprensione reciproca, la cooperazione e la costruzione di ponti tra tradizioni, culture e visioni del mondo diverse (20 maggio), come il papa ha ricordato pure ai buddisti thailandesi (27 maggio). Il dialogo interreligioso "è una condizione necessaria per la pace nel mondo, e quindi è un dovere per i cristiani e per le altre comunità religiose" (3 giugno). Alla Conferenza interreligiosa del Kerala, ha ricordato che "come seguaci delle nostre rispettive tradizioni religiose, dovremmo sempre cooperare con tutte le persone di buona volontà per promuovere "una cultura di rispetto, dignità, compassione, riconciliazione e solidarietà fraterna" (30 novembre).

Il fattore religioso, per sua natura, non deve essere strumentalizzato, ma dovrebbe contribuire ad attenuare l'asprezza dei contrasti e a creare uno spazio per garantire a tutti i diritti di cittadinanza, in condizioni di parità e senza discriminazioni (7 agosto). Anche la comunicazione deve incoraggiare l'inclusione, il dialogo e la ricerca della pace (31 ottobre). Si tratta di sviluppare la capacità di ascolto e l'arte del dialogo, che sono naturalmente ancorate a una vita di preghiera, in cui si entra in dialogo con il Signore, soffermandosi alla sua presenza per imparare da Lui l'arte dell'amore che si dona, in modo che a poco a poco la propria esistenza entri in sintonia con il cuore del Maestro (1 agosto).

In visita pastorale ad Ajaccio, il Santo Padre ha spiegato che il più efficace mezzo di evangelizzazione è "Prendersi cura degli altri: di coloro che seguono l'insegnamento di Gesù, di coloro che si sono allontanati da lui, di coloro che hanno

bisogno di essere rimessi sulla strada giusta o di trovare consolazione nelle loro sofferenze. Prendersi cura di tutti, nella formazione e soprattutto nell'incontro. Incontrare le persone dove vivono e lavorano è importante" (15 dicembre).

Università, educazione e dialogo

La specificità missionaria e interculturale delle istituzioni accademiche deve educare a mediare il messaggio cristiano nei confronti di altre culture e religioni (30 agosto). L'Università, se vuole essere un luogo e uno strumento della missione della Chiesa, deve elaborare saperi generati da Dio, provati nel dialogo con l'umanità, abbandonando l'approccio del "noi e gli altri". Il papa ha fatto un confronto tra lo scambio dei libri e lo scambio delle idee, che realmente arricchisce chi ne è protagonista: "L'Università è un luogo di dialogo. Proviamo a immaginare due studenti che arrivano con un libro ciascuno, che poi si scambiano. Ciascuno tornerà a casa con un solo libro, ma se questi studenti si scambiano una riflessione o un'idea quando se ne vanno, ognuno porterà a casa una riflessione o un'idea in più. Ma non è solo la quantità: ognuno sarà in debito con l'altro, ognuno sarà parte dell'altro" (5 novembre).

In particolare, i poliglotti, oltre alla capacità di comprendere e parlare più lingue, tendono ad avere capacità analitiche più raffinate, migliori capacità comunicative e sociali e una maggiore attitudine al discernimento. In questo senso, sono meglio attrezzati per apprezzare la ricchezza di altre culture, anche molto lontane dalla loro (9 settembre). "La cultura intesa come cura di sé deve comportare la cura degli altri. Non c'è conflitto tra studenti e professori. C'è dialogo. A volte è più intenso, ma c'è dialogo e il dialogo permette alla comunità universitaria di crescere" (28 settembre).

"Ho spesso ripetuto un proverbio africano che afferma che ci vuole un intero villaggio per educare un bambino. Sforziamoci, allora, di costruire questo "villaggio educativo", dove lavorare insieme per promuovere relazioni umane positive e culturalmente feconde. Attraverso queste relazioni strette, può certamente nascere un'alleanza educativa tra tutti coloro che lavorano per la crescita personale degli individui nei suoi vari aspetti scientifici, politici, artistici, sportivi e altro. L'educazione non è un processo che si conclude una volta usciti dall'aula o dalla biblioteca, ma continua per tutta la vita, negli incontri quotidiani con gli altri e nei percorsi che intraprendiamo. Ascoltare l'altro, riflettere sul dialogo: questa è la via dell'educazione (9 novembre).

"Educare è aiutare a pensare bene, a sentire bene e a fare del bene. I tre linguaggi: il linguaggio del cuore - sentire bene - il linguaggio della testa - pensare bene - e il linguaggio delle mani - fare del bene. Ma tutti in armonia: fare ciò che si sente e si pensa; sentire ciò che si pensa e si fa; pensare ciò che si sente e si fa. Questi tre linguaggi, uniti, tutti insieme" (21 novembre).

A Giacarta, in Indonesia, terra dell'armonia, il papa ha ribadito che l'armonia nella diversità si realizza quando le prospettive particolari tengono conto delle esigenze comuni a tutti e quando ogni gruppo etnico e confessione religiosa agisce in spirito di fraternità, perseguendo il nobile obiettivo di servire il bene di tutti. La consapevolezza di partecipare a una storia condivisa, in cui la solidarietà è essenziale e i contributi sono di tutti, aiuta a individuare le soluzioni giuste, a evitare l'esasperazione dei contrasti e a trasformare la contrapposizione in cooperazione efficace. Al clero, sempre a Giacarta, il papa ha dato un messaggio che vale per tutti: "*Fede, Fraternità, Compassione* sono le virtù che esprimono bene sia il vostro cammino come Chiesa sia il vostro carattere come popolo, che è etnicamente e culturalmente diverso. Allo stesso tempo, siete caratterizzati da un innato impegno per l'unità e la coesistenza pacifica, come testimoniano i principi tradizionali della *Pancasila*" (4 settembre). I responsabili religiosi, in particolare, ispirati dalle rispettive narrazioni e tradizioni spirituali, dovrebbero collaborare per rispondere alle crisi ambientali, identificandone le cause e adottando le azioni appropriate (5 settembre). I valori spirituali influenzano notevolmente la costruzione della città terrena e di tutte le realtà temporali. In altre parole, questi valori infondono un'anima, ispirano e rafforzano ogni progetto (7 settembre).

A più riprese, durante il viaggio apostolico in Indonesia, Papua, Timor e Singapore, il papa ha esortato a sognare la fraternità, a seminare semi d'amore, a percorrere con fiducia la strada del dialogo, a continuare a mostrare bontà e gentilezza (5 e 9 settembre), a diffondere la fragranza di Cristo e del Vangelo, un profumo che arricchisce la vita e ci riempie di gioia più del legno di sandalo di Timor (10 settembre).

Papa Francesco ha lodato a Singapore l'impegno per lo sviluppo sostenibile e la salvaguardia del creato con la ricerca di soluzioni innovative per affrontare le sfide ambientali. che può incoraggiare altri Paesi a fare lo stesso. "Singapore è un esempio brillante di ciò che l'umanità può ottenere lavorando insieme in armonia, con senso di responsabilità e spirito di inclusione e fratellanza. Questo riassume il vostro atteggiamento: lavorare insieme, in armonia, con senso di responsabilità e in uno spirito di fratellanza e inclusione" (12 settembre).

Inaugurando il tunnel dell'amicizia, che collega la Moschea e la Cattedrale a Giacarta, il papa ha richiamato la "mistica" di vivere insieme, di mescolarci, di incontrarci, di prenderci in braccio, di appoggiarci, di partecipare a questa marea un po' caotica che può trasformarsi in una vera esperienza di fraternità, in una carovana solidale, in un santo pellegrinaggio (5 settembre).

Ai giovani durante l'incontro interreligioso a Singapore, ha paragonato le religioni alle lingue, come vie per giungere a Dio: "C'è un solo Dio, e le religioni

sono come lingue, percorsi per raggiungere Dio. Alcuni sikh, alcuni musulmani, alcuni indù, alcuni cristiani. Capito? Eppure, il dialogo interreligioso tra i giovani richiede coraggio. L'età della giovinezza è l'età del coraggio, ma si può abusare di questo coraggio per fare cose che non ci aiuteranno. Dovreste invece avere il coraggio di andare avanti e di dialogare" (13 settembre). Analogamente, incoraggiando i giovani italiani a impegnarsi nelle istituzioni pubbliche, il papa ha detto che "nella vita è necessario attraversare anche i conflitti. Bisogna avere la pazienza di trasformarli nella capacità di ascoltare, di riconoscere l'altro, di crescere insieme. Cercare di superare i conflitti è segno che abbiamo puntato più in alto, più in alto del nostro interesse personale, per uscire dalle sabbie mobili dell'inimicizia sociale" (16 novembre).

Fraternità universale e cura della "casa comune"

A più riprese, il Santo Padre ha sviluppato il messaggio dell'Enciclica *Fratelli tutti*, denunciando l'egoismo che impedisce di superare le barriere geografiche e la distanza (25 gennaio). A cinque anni dalla firma del Documento sulla fraternità umana ad Abu Dhabi, il viaggio continua, ma le devastazioni ambientali e il degrado sociale non cessano di destare preoccupazione. È necessario cambiare la percezione dell'altro nelle pubblicazioni, nei discorsi, e nell'insegnamento (4 febbraio), per camminare nel rispetto della diversità, impegno per la "casa comune" e promozione della pace (4 aprile). La testimonianza di fraternità tra cristiani, ebrei e musulmani è indispensabile e preziosa (26 giugno). Come in famiglia, il "dialogo tra credenti di religioni diverse fa proprio questo: ci permette di uscire dai nostri schemi familiari di pensiero e di azione e di aprirci all'incontro con la grande famiglia umana. Ma perché il dialogo sia fruttuoso, deve soddisfare diverse condizioni: deve essere aperto, deve essere sincero, deve essere rispettoso, deve essere amichevole e deve essere concreto" (20 novembre).

Il papa ha ringraziato una delegazione di giainisti "per i vostri sforzi nel cercare insieme modi di prendersi cura della terra, dei poveri e dei più vulnerabili nella società", che richiedono iniziative intraprese con serietà e impegno, oltre che con un senso di responsabilità condivisa (25 novembre).

La parabola del Buon Samaritano insegna come "ricostruire la comunità partendo dalla vulnerabilità degli altri", verso i quali ci si comporta come prossimo (11 aprile). Questo significa camminare insieme, ascoltarsi, dialogare, anche litigare, ma sempre come comunità (25 maggio).

La cura della natura, la giustizia per i poveri, l'impegno per la società, la protezione della vita e della famiglia, la difesa della dignità di ogni vita umana e la pace esteriore e interiore appartengono a un'unica realtà (29 maggio).

Come segnali concreti di attenzione alla promozione della conversione eco-

logica, il pontefice ha voluto un impianto agri voltaico a Santa Maria di Galeria (Roma) per coprire con energia “verde” il fabbisogno energetico dello Stato della Città del Vaticano (28 giugno), e ha creato il “Borgo Laudato si” a Castel Gandolfo, connesso all’omonimo Centro di Alta Formazione ugualmente da lui voluto per dare attuazione all’enciclica *Laudato si’* (19 settembre).

Nella stessa ottica, si deve leggere l’invito rivolto ai movimenti popolari: “Il nostro cammino continua a sognare e a lavorare insieme affinché tutti i lavoratori abbiano diritti, tutte le famiglie abbiano un tetto sopra la testa, tutti i contadini abbiano la terra, tutti i bambini abbiano un’istruzione, tutti i giovani abbiano un futuro, tutti gli anziani abbiano una buona pensione, tutte le donne abbiano pari diritti, tutti i popoli abbiano la sovranità, tutti gli indigeni abbiano un territorio, tutti i migranti siano accolti, tutti i gruppi etnici siano rispettati, tutte le fedi siano libere, tutte le regioni abbiano la pace, tutti gli ecosistemi siano protetti. È un percorso permanente, ci saranno progressi e battute d’arresto, errori e successi, ma non abbiate dubbi: è la strada giusta” (20 settembre).

La Santa Sede sostiene gli sforzi della comunità internazionale specialmente nel campo dell’educazione all’ecologia integrale e nella sensibilizzazione all’ambiente come “un problema umano e sociale a più livelli” (13 novembre).

La visione della natura, nella sua interezza, come dono di Dio, ci invita a riflettere sulla nostra responsabilità nei confronti della casa comune. Il dialogo tra scienza e fede può e deve esserci: entrambe sono infatti chiamate a guidare la nostra comprensione del mondo (23 ottobre).

Intelligenza artificiale

Più volte il papa ha sottolineato il rischio che l’intelligenza artificiale potrebbe rafforzare il paradigma tecnocratico e la cultura dello spreco, aggravare le disparità tra paesi avanzati e paesi in via di sviluppo e delegare a una macchina decisioni essenziali per la vita umana (22 giugno). Le ricchezze culturali dei popoli e delle religioni devono guidare l’innovazione tecnologica (10 luglio). Occorre riconoscere e prevenire i rischi delle applicazioni manipolative dell’intelligenza artificiale per plasmare l’opinione pubblica, influenzare le scelte dei consumatori e interferire con i processi elettorali (23 settembre). “La scelta da fare è tra manipolare la natura o prendersene cura. [...]. E dobbiamo iniziare dalla nostra natura umana, comprese le questioni di eugenetica, organismi cibernetici e intelligenza artificiale. Ma la scelta tra manipolare o coltivare riguarda anche la nostra vita interiore (28 settembre).

Ai centri di ricerca delle nostre università, il papa ha chiesto di studiare l’attuale “rivoluzione tecnologica” per fare luce sui suoi benefici e sui suoi pericoli (21 novembre). Ma se è vero che il paradigma tecnocratico rimane dominante, c’è

bisogno di una nuova cultura, capace di fare spazio a un'etica, a una cultura e a una spiritualità, che siano adeguatamente solide (*3 giugno*), una cultura che allarga i confini ed evita il "settarismo", o l'esaltazione di sé stessi al di sopra degli altri. Una cultura immersa come buon "lievito" nel nostro mondo, che contribuisca al bene comune dell'umanità (*27 settembre*).

Fede e cultura in Europa

In Europa, le comunità ecclesiali e civili devono scoprire modi per esprimere la loro fede e la loro cultura con una fedeltà creativa alle loro ricche tradizioni. In questo modo, potranno contribuire alla costruzione di un'Europa fatta di popoli che vivono in armonia, l'uno accanto all'altro, conservando le loro peculiarità, ma aperti all'incontro e al dialogo con le altre culture del nostro mondo (*11 giugno*), nel contesto di una corretta relazione tra religione e società (*7 luglio*).

L'Europa ha bisogno di paesi come il Belgio per continuare a percorrere la strada della pace e della fratellanza tra i suoi popoli. "Quando le nazioni non rispettano le frontiere o violano i trattati adducendo le scuse più varie e insostenibili, e quando usano le armi per sostituire il diritto reale con il principio del "potere è giusto", allora aprono il vaso di Pandora, scatenando violente tempeste che si abbattono sulla casa, minacciando di distruggerla" (*27 settembre*).

Sinodalità, speranza, sviluppo integrale

Uomini e donne sinodali hanno maturato la capacità di impegnarsi nel dialogo, di relazionarsi, di cercare insieme. In questo senso, sono pellegrini di speranza (*25 aprile*). La speranza non è un'emozione o un sentimento, ma la persona stessa di Gesù (*10 maggio*). La pratica del discernimento, che è personale e orientato alla verità, la Chiesa affianca i nostri fratelli e sorelle nella fede, per camminare insieme, non da soli, e così la nostra crescita interiore si arricchisce notevolmente. In questo senso, il discernimento è sinodale. I giovani devono essere responsabilizzati, coinvolti nel dialogo, nelle attività di pianificazione e nelle decisioni (*25 maggio*). Per loro è importante vedere modelli di speranza e idealismo che contrastino i messaggi di pessimismo e cinismo a cui sono così spesso esposti. La guerra non è speranza; la guerra non dà speranza. L'impegno per il bene comune, sostenuto dalla fiducia nelle promesse di Cristo, sia di esempio per i nostri giovani (*24 agosto*).

Vivete come pellegrini della speranza. Con coraggio, non stancatevi di sognare la pace giusta e la fraternità, perché questo è anche il sogno del Padre: che i suoi figli siano uniti e felici, riconoscendosi come fratelli e sorelle. Guardate oltre la notte! Non cedete al pensiero che la guerra possa risolvere i problemi e portare alla pace. La guerra è sempre una sconfitta, una vergognosa resa alle forze del male. Ricordiamo tutte le vittime, che non dobbiamo mai dimenticare, e che

questo ricordo ci apra davvero a trovare una via di riconciliazione nel presente (30 agosto).

Commemorando il 40mo anniversario del Trattato di pace tra Argentina e Cile, il Santo Padre ha esortato a “perseverare in ogni momento con ferma determinazione fino alle ultime conseguenze nel tentativo di risolvere le controversie con un reale desiderio di dialogo e di accordo, attraverso un paziente negoziato e con i necessari compromessi, tenendo sempre conto delle giuste esigenze e dei legittimi interessi di tutti” (25 novembre).

A questo proposito, come non fare riferimento ai numerosi conflitti armati in corso che rimangono ancora irrisolti, nonostante siano causa di immense sofferenze per i Paesi in guerra e per l'intera famiglia umana.

Sperare senza stancarsi. “So che non è facile proporre una nuova economia in un contesto di nuove e vecchie guerre, mentre l'industria delle armi prospera sottraendo risorse ai poveri. Sapevate che in alcuni Paesi gli investimenti più redditizi sono la produzione di armi? Si guadagna uccidendo. In questi casi, la democrazia è minacciata, il populismo e le disuguaglianze crescono e il pianeta è sempre più ferito”. [...]. Ricordiamo allora ciò che Gesù disse ai discepoli: “Non abbiate paura”. Lui vi aiuterà e la Chiesa non vi lascerà soli (25 settembre). La Chiesa deve tenere le porte aperte: “una Chiesa che offre a tutti un'apertura sull'infinito e che sa guardare oltre. Questa è la Chiesa che evangelizza, che vive la gioia del Vangelo e pratica la misericordia” (28 settembre).

La sfida dello sviluppo integrale richiede la fedeltà. “Fedeltà a Dio e fedeltà a ogni uomo e donna. Infatti, tale sviluppo riguarda tutte le persone negli aspetti fisici, morali, culturali e socio-politici della loro vita. Inoltre, questo tipo di sviluppo è contrario a tutte le forme di oppressione e di rifiuto degli altri, e la Chiesa denuncia questi abusi, impegnandosi soprattutto nella conversione di ciascuno dei suoi membri, di ciascuno di noi, alla giustizia e alla verità. In questo senso, lo sviluppo integrale ci chiama alla santità, alla vocazione di una vita giusta e felice” (28 settembre).

In apertura della seconda sessione della XVI Assemblea generale del Sinodo dei Vescovi, il Santo Padre ha invitato ad “avere cuori aperti, cuori in dialogo. Un cuore chiuso nelle convinzioni personali non è proprio dello Spirito del Signore. Non è del Signore. È un dono aprirsi, e questo dono deve essere unito, quando necessario, alla capacità di rilassare i muscoli e di chinarsi per offrire all'altro un abbraccio accogliente e un luogo di rifugio” per “pensare più apertamente e ad andare avanti con più decisione” (2 ottobre). E nel saluto finale, ha delineato il sentiero solidale, non solo come “sognare la pace, ma impegnarci con tutte le nostre forze affinché, anche se non parliamo molto di sinodalità, la pace possa essere raggiunta attraverso processi di ascolto, dialogo e riconciliazione. La Chiesa sinodale per la missione ha bisogno che le parole che abbiamo condiviso siano sostenute dai fatti” (26 ottobre).

Al Sinodo della Chiesa siro-malankarese, il papa ha riportato un detto del metropolita ortodosso Giovanni Zizioulas sull'unità dei cristiani: «Conosco la data in cui ci sarà la piena unità tra le Chiese. Qual è la data? “Il giorno dopo il Giudizio Universale”. E ha aggiunto: “Ma nel frattempo dobbiamo camminare insieme, pregare insieme e lavorare insieme”. Tutti insieme» (11 novembre). Lo ha ripetuto ai metodisti, spiegando che è il Cuore di Gesù ad operare la trasformazione, quando tocca il nostro cuore (16 dicembre). È lo Spirito Santo “l'agente del processo sinodale!... È Lui che apre le persone e le comunità all'ascolto; è Lui che rende il dialogo autentico e fruttuoso; è Lui che illumina il discernimento; è Lui che guida le scelte e le decisioni. Ed è Lui, soprattutto, che crea l'armonia, la comunione nella Chiesa” (11 novembre). Ha incoraggiato anche i dipendenti vaticani: “Se qualcuno ha qualche difficoltà particolare, è pregato di parlarne, di dirlo ai capi, perché vogliamo risolvere tutte le difficoltà, e questo si fa con il dialogo, si fa con il dialogo, non con le urla, né con il silenzio” (21 dicembre).

La speranza di un mondo fraterno non è un'ideologia, né un sistema economico, né il progresso tecnico. La speranza di un mondo fraterno è Lui, il Figlio incarnato, inviato dal Padre affinché tutti noi possiamo diventare ciò che siamo, cioè figli del Padre che è nei cieli, e quindi fratelli e sorelle gli uni degli altri (31 dicembre).

Mediterraneo

Facendo eco a Giorgio La Pira, Papa Francesco manifesta una speciale attenzione al Mediterraneo quale nuovo lago di Tiberiade: “Siamo tutti pellegrini della speranza, che camminano alla ricerca della verità, vivendo la nostra fede e costruendo la pace - perché la pace deve essere costruita! Dio ama ogni uomo, non fa differenze tra noi. La fraternità tra le cinque sponde del Mediterraneo che state istituendo è la risposta - davvero una risposta! -la migliore risposta che possiamo dare ai conflitti e alle indifferenze mortali [...]. Come in un grande lago di Tiberiade che ora è affidato alle vostre cure, voi abitate le rive di questo mare che vi unisce - il Mediterraneo vi unisce! Vi raccoglie come in un bel giardino che siete chiamati a coltivare” (17 settembre).

Nel videomessaggio per l'inaugurazione dell'anno accademico 2024-2025 della Facoltà Teologica di Palermo, il Santo Padre ha parlato della Sicilia come del “luogo dove culture, storie e volti diversi si incontrano in armonia, e impegnano la teologia a favorire il dialogo con le Chiese sorelle d'Oriente che si affacciano anche sul Mediterraneo”, spiegando che “la strada del dialogo ecumenico e interreligioso, per quanto difficile, è quella di riproporre e sostenere, attraverso esperienze di incontro, esperienze anche di scambio e collaborazione, l'ascolto comune dello Spirito Santo. È l'eredità di molti martiri del dialogo nel Mediterraneo” con la

missione di essere “laboratorio di una teologia del dialogo ecumenico e di una teologia delle religioni, che porti a una teologia del dialogo interreligioso. Sempre la parola dialogo, dialogo, apertura. [...] il Mediterraneo ha bisogno di una teologia viva, che coltivi appieno la sua dimensione contestuale, diventando un appello per tutti” (16 ottobre).

“Essere creativi nella fraternità” è il mandato affidato dal papa all’Istituto Teologico “San Paolo” di Catania: “Il vostro impegno sarà più fruttuoso se saprete dialogare con le culture e le religioni degli altri popoli del Mediterraneo, che guardano al futuro con speranza. Per favore, non spegniamo la speranza dei poveri, di quei poveri che sono i migranti! E voi siete accoglienti verso i migranti. Integrate i migranti. Per voi, anche la sfida dei migranti musulmani: come integrarli e aiutarli a entrare nelle diocesi” (6 dicembre).

Sport

Nel messaggio agli atleti per le Olimpiadi di Parigi, il papa scrive che “lo sport è un linguaggio universale che trascende confini, lingue, razze, nazionalità e religioni; ha la capacità di unire le persone, di favorire il dialogo e l’accettazione reciproca; stimola il superamento di sé stessi, forma allo spirito di sacrificio, favorisce la lealtà nei rapporti interpersonali; invita a riconoscere i propri limiti e il valore degli altri” (27 giugno).

Pietà popolare e secolarità

Nel messaggio inviato al congresso delle confraternite a Siviglia il papa ha sottolineato la relazione tra fraternità e pietà popolare, tra pellegrinaggio, processione e vita, come un indicare la strada alle persone che abbiamo incontrato, alle quali abbiamo mostrato la bellezza di Gesù, della sua Chiesa, di questo amore folle, per tornare a Dio (9 maggio).

Nella visita pastorale ad Ajaccio, il papa è intervenuto a chiusura del convegno sulla religiosità popolare nel Mediterraneo, rivalutando la pietà popolare, che, “esprimendo la fede attraverso gesti semplici e un linguaggio simbolico radicato nella cultura del popolo, [...] rivela la presenza di Dio nella carne viva della storia, rafforza il rapporto con la Chiesa e spesso diventa occasione di incontro, scambio culturale e festa. [...] le sue pratiche danno vita alla relazione con il Signore e ai contenuti della fede”. Nello stesso contesto, Francesco ha invitato a coltivare una “sana laicità, [che] garantisce che l’attività politica non manipoli la religione, mentre la pratica religiosa rimane libera da una politica di interessi personali, che a volte è appena compatibile con il credo religioso, se non addirittura contraria ad esso”, per un dialogo aperto, franco e fruttuoso (15 dicembre).

TEACHINGS AND DISCOURSES OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS

TO THE SOCIETY OF CATHOLIC PUBLICISTS OF GERMANY
(GESELLSCHAFT KATHOLISCHER PUBLIZISTEN DEUTSCHLANDS)*

Consistory Hall, 4 January 2024

Your Association proposes commitment to ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and also the defence of peace, freedom and human dignity. These aims are as relevant as ever! How many conflicts today, instead of being extinguished by dialogue, are fuelled by false or inflammatory statements in the media! Therefore, it is even more important that you, steadfast in your Christian roots and the faith you live daily, “demilitarized” at heart by the Gospel, support the disarming of language. This is fundamental: fostering overtones of peace and understanding, building bridges, being willing to listen, to exercise respectful communication towards others and their reasons. There is an urgent need for this in society, but even the Church needs communication that is “gentle and at the same time prophetic” (*Message for the 57th World Communications Day, 24 January 2023*).

TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

Benediction Hall, 8 January 2024

Dialogue, on the other hand, must be the soul of the international community. The current situation is also the result of the weakening of structures of multilateral diplomacy that arose after the Second World War. Organizations established to foster security, peace and cooperation are no longer capable of uniting all their members around one table. There is the risk of a “monadology” and of splitting into “clubs” that only admit states deemed ideologically compatible. Even agencies devoted to the common good and to technical questions, which have thus

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240104-giornalisti-cattolici-tedeschi.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240108-corpo-diplomatico.html>

far proved effective, risk paralysis due to ideological polarization and exploitation by individual states.

In order to relaunch a shared commitment to the service of peace, there is a need to recover the roots, the spirit and the values that gave rise to those organizations, while at the same time taking into account the changed context and showing regard for those who do not feel adequately represented by the structures of international organizations.

To be sure, dialogue requires patience, perseverance and an ability to listen, yet when sincere attempts are made to put an end to disagreements, significant results can be achieved. One example that comes to mind is the Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, signed by the British and Irish governments, whose twenty-fifth anniversary was commemorated last year. Putting an end to thirty years of violent conflict, it can serve as an example to motivate and encourage authorities to trust in peace processes, whatever the hardships and sacrifices they entail.

The way to peace is through political and social dialogue, since it is the basis for civil coexistence in a modern political community. 2024 will witness elections being held in many nations. Elections are an essential moment in the life of any country, since they allow all citizens responsibly to choose their leaders. The words of Pope Pius XII remain as timely as ever: “To express one’s own view of the duties and sacrifices imposed on him or her; not to be compelled to obey without first being heard – these are two rights of the citizen which find expression in democracy, as its very name implies. From the stability, harmony and good fruits produced by this contact between the citizens and the government of the state, one may recognize whether a democracy is truly sound and well balanced, and perceive the vigour of its life and development”. (*Christmas Radio Message to the Peoples of the World*, 24 December 1944).

[...] The path to peace also passes through interreligious dialogue, which before all else requires the protection of religious freedom and respect for minorities. It is painful to note, for example, that an increasing number of countries are adopting models of centralized control over religious freedom, especially by the massive use of technology. In other places, minority religious communities often find themselves in increasingly precarious situations. In some cases, they risk extinction due to a combination of terrorism, attacks on their cultural heritage and more subtle measures such as the proliferation of anti-conversion laws, the manipulation of electoral rules and financial restrictions.

Of particular concern is the rise in acts of anti-Semitism in recent months. Once again, I would reiterate that this scourge must be eliminated from society, especially through education in fraternity and acceptance of others.

Equally troubling is the increase in persecution and discrimination against

Christians, especially over the last ten years. At times, this involves nonviolent but socially significant cases of gradual marginalization and exclusion from political and social life and from the exercise of certain professions, even in traditionally Christian lands. Altogether, more than 360 million Christians around the world are experiencing a high level of discrimination and persecution because of their faith, with more and more of them being forced to flee their homelands.

TO THE DIALOP (TRANSVERSAL DIALOGUE PROJECT) ASSOCIATION*

Room adjacent to the Paul VI Hall, 10 January 2024

I am pleased to welcome you, the representatives of DIALOP, who for many years have been committed to promoting the common good through dialogue between Socialists/Marxists and Christians. A fine programme!

A Latin American writer once wrote that people have two eyes, one of flesh and one of glass. With the first, they see what they look at; with the other, what they dream of. Never lose the ability to dream! Today, in a world divided by war and polarization, we run the risk of losing the ability to dream. We Argentines say, “no te arrugues”, meaning “don’t back off”. This is my invitation to you as well: Don’t back off, don’t give up, and don’t stop dreaming of a better world. For it is in imagination, the ability to dream, that intelligence, intuition, experience and historical memory come together to make us be creative, take chances and run risks. How many times over the years have great dreams of freedom and equality, dignity and fraternity, reflecting God’s own dream, produced breakthroughs and progress. With this in mind, I would like to commend to you three attitudes that I consider helpful for your efforts: the courage to break the mould, concern for the less fortunate and support for the rule of law.

First, to have the courage to break the mould, to be open, in dialogue, to new ways. At a time marked by conflicts and divisions at various levels, let us not lose sight of what can still be done to turn the tide. Instead of rigid approaches that divide, let us cultivate, with open hearts, discussion and listening. And not exclude anyone at the political, social or religious level, so that the contribution of each can, in its concrete distinctiveness, receive a positive reception in the processes of change to which our future is linked.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240110-dialop.html>

Second, concern for the less fortunate. The measure of a civilization can be seen by how the most vulnerable are treated – let us not forget how the great dictatorships, we think of Nazism, discarded and killed those who were most vulnerable -: the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, immigrants, the exploited, and all those whom the culture of waste turns into refuse. This is one of the most terrible things. A politics that is truly at the service of humanity cannot let itself be dictated to by finance and market mechanisms. Solidarity is not only a moral virtue, but also a requirement of justice, which calls for correcting the distortions and purifying the intentions of unjust systems, not least through radical changes of perspective in the sharing of challenges and resources among individuals and among peoples. That is why I like to call those engaged in this field “social poets,” for poetry is about creativity, and here it is a question of putting creativity at the service of society, in order to make it ever more humane and fraternal. Do not be afraid of poetry, poetry and creativity. Let us not forget this ability to dream.

Finally, the rule of law. Everything said thus far calls for commitment to combating the scourge of corruption, abuses of power and lack of respect for law. It is only in honesty and integrity that healthy relationships can be established and that we can cooperate confidently and effectively in building a better future.

Dear friends, I thank you for your commitment to dialogue. There is always a great need for dialogue, so do not be afraid! I pray for you and I ask that you be granted wisdom and courage in your work for a more just and peaceful world. May the Gospel of Jesus Christ always inspire and enlighten your efforts and activity.

TO THE “TONIOLO YOUNG PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION”*

Clementine Hall, 12 January 2024

Life asks to be given, not managed. Life is for giving. Life asks to be given, not managed. The witness of Blessed Giuseppe Toniolo, who drew the beauty of living from faith and fearlessly confronted the problems of his time to give the economy a human face, can help you in this. It is good that you too allow yourselves to be challenged by reality, rediscovering and rethinking faith so as to draw from it untold riches for a better future.

I would like to crystallize these ideas around an urgent theme, the theme of peace. A look at today makes that aspiration to the good, to concord, to peaceful

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240112-toniolo-association.html>

coexistence between peoples, of which diplomatic activity has always been a vehicle, seem distant. And yet so much diplomacy seems to have forgotten its nature as a resource required to bridge the ever-deepening chasm of the relations between nations. We see it chasing after events without that preventive force, that dreaming-dialogue-risking for peace that curbs recourse to weapons. And wars are thus the fruit of prolonged relations of force, without a precise beginning and without a certain end. But where are the bold ventures, the daring visions? And from whom can they come, if not from young and fearless hearts, which welcome the good within themselves and grasp the Gospel as it is, to write new pages of fraternity and hope?

**TO THE STUDENTS OF THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE
FOR CULTURAL COLLABORATION WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES
AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT***

Consistory Hall, 12 January 2024

[...] the visiting students can follow personally not only the academic courses, but also the formational, spiritual and liturgical growth of the Catholic students and, above all, share with them the experience of community life in the Ecclesiastical Colleges. This vital and direct contact with concrete communities, in which all share the same desire to follow the one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to serve his Church, helps not only the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox students, but the Catholic ones as well, to overcome prejudices, to break down walls and to build bridges of dialogue and friendship.

This is so important! It makes me think of the early Christian communities, those first disciples who became apostles, and to whom our traditions trace their origins. If we look closely at them, we see that they were quite diverse: disciples of the Baptist, zealots, fishers and tax collectors; vastly different in background, character and sympathies! Yet it is hard to think of a group that was more united. They found their cohesiveness in Jesus. Walking in his footsteps, they journeyed alongside one another. Their unity in charity was cemented by the Holy Spirit, who sent them far and wide, thus binding them all the more closely to one another.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240112-comitato-collaborazione-chieseor.html>

Dear friends, this is also the path that you should follow, as you journey together in the footsteps of Jesus, guided by the same Spirit. Studying here in Rome, you have a great opportunity to share with one another who Christ is for you, where you encountered him, how he won your hearts and laid hold of your lives, and the variety of traditions by which you offer him praise and acknowledge him as your Lord. On the basis of your fraternal sharing of this experience, I believe that our past histories, marred by mistakes and misunderstanding, sins and stereotypes, can gradually be healed, in as much as they are considered anew as part of a much greater story, that of fidelity to Christ, who “loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). It is my hope that, to the praise and glory of the Lord, these years may prove to be, through mutual acceptance and fraternal respect, dialogue and sharing, a prophecy of charity and a seedbed of unity. This will be a great boon for Christians throughout the world, and for the world itself, which greatly needs to see a blossoming of new seeds of peace and communion.

**TO THE JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES***

Consistory Hall, 26 January 2024

These visits are important, for they allow the “dialogue of charity” to go hand in hand with the “dialogue of truth” that your Commission pursues. From the earliest days of the Church, such visits, together with the exchange of letters, delegations and gifts, have been a sign and means of communion, as your Commission noted in its document, *The Exercise of Communion in the Life of the Early Church and its Implications for our Search for Communion*. These gestures, grounded in recognition of the one Baptism, are not merely acts of courtesy or diplomacy, but have an ecclesial import and can be considered true *loci theologici*. As Saint John Paul II stated in his Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, “acknowledging our brotherhood... is something much more than an act of ecumenical courtesy; it constitutes a basic ecclesiological statement” (No. 42).

In this regard, I am convinced that the “dialogue of charity” should be understood not simply as a preparation for the “dialogue of truth”, but as itself a “theology in action”, capable of opening new horizons on the journey of our Churches.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240126-dialogo-teologico.html>

At a time when, thank God, relations between us are deepening, I believe that it is good to think back on the development of those relations in the light of a “theology of dialogue in charity”.

Dear friends, your Commission held its first meeting in Cairo, in January 2004. Since then it has met almost every year and adopted three important documents dealing with ecclesiological themes, all reflecting the richness of the Christian traditions you represent: Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Malankara, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Latin. Your dialogue has reflected that great richness in its approach to the issue of unity in diversity, as witnessed by the first document you produced. There we read that, “putting down roots in a variety of cultural, social and human terrains, the Church takes on different theological expressions of the same faith and different appearances in ecclesiastical disciplines, liturgical rites and spiritual heritages in each part of the world. This richness shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the one Church” (*Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church*, 2009, No. 20).

Another feature of your dialogue has been its constant pastoral concern, as illustrated by the latest document on *The Sacraments in the Life of the Church*. In this regard, the recent initiative of organizing yearly and reciprocal study visits for young priests and monks is worthy of continuing. Four delegations of young Oriental Orthodox priests and monks have already come to Rome to learn more about the Catholic Church at the invitation of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity, which I thank for this. Likewise, a delegation of young Catholic priests travelled to Etchmiadzin last year at the invitation of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The involvement of young people in bringing our Churches closer together is a sign of the Spirit, who rejuvenates the Church in harmony, inspires paths of communion, and grants wisdom to the young and prophecy to the old (cf. *Joel 2:28*). May this “dialogue of life” continue under the banner of the Spirit! And let us not forget that it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony.

The dialogue of charity, the dialogue of truth and the dialogue of life: three inseparable ways to advance on the ecumenical journey that your Commission has encouraged over these past twenty years. Twenty years: that is the time of youth, the age when decisive choices mature. May this anniversary be a time to praise God for the journey travelled thus far, and to remember with gratitude all those who have contributed to it by their theological expertise and prayer. May it renew the conviction that full communion between our Churches is not only possible, but urgent and necessary “so that the world may believe” (*Jn. 17:21*).

**TO THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF NOTRE DAME, INDIANA, U.S.A.***

Clementine Hall, 1st February 2024

The task of a Catholic university, however, is not only to expand the mind, the head; it must expand the heart. If we think and do not feel, we are not human. The whole university community is called to accompany others, especially young people, with wisdom and respect along the paths of life and help them cultivate an openness to all that is true, good and beautiful. This involves the establishment of genuine relationships between educators and students so that they can walk together and understand the deepest questions, needs and dreams experienced in human life. I will pose a question, that each of you can answer later: do you help young people to dream? I ask the question. It also means promoting dialogue and a culture of encounter, so that all can learn to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person as a brother or sister, and most fundamentally, as a beloved child of God. Here, we cannot overlook the essential role of religion in educating people's hearts. Consequently, I am pleased that the University of Notre Dame is marked by an atmosphere that enables students, faculty and staff to grow spiritually and bear witness to the joy of the Gospel, its power to renew society and its capacity to provide the strength to face wisely the challenges of the present time.

MESSAGE FOR THE 2024 FRATERNITY CAMPAIGN OF THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL**

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 January 2024

As brothers and sisters, we are invited to build a true universal fraternity that enhances our life in society and our survival on Earth, our Common Home, without ever losing sight of Heaven, where the Father will welcome us all as his children.

Unfortunately, we still see many shadows in the world, signs of selfishness. This is why I remind you of the need to broaden our circles to reach out to those whom we may not naturally feel are part of our world of interests (cf. *FT* 97), to

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/february/documents/20240201-university-indiana.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240125-messaggio-fraternita-brasile.html>

extend our love to “all living beings” (FT 59), overcoming borders and “the barriers of geography and distance” (FT 1).

LETTER TO JEWISH BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ISRAEL*

Vatican City, 2 February 2024

We are experiencing a painful moment of travail. Wars and divisions are increasing all over the world. We are truly, as I said some time ago, in the midst of a sort of “piecemeal world war”, with serious consequences for the lives of many populations.

Unfortunately, even the Holy Land has not been spared this pain, and since 7 October, it too has been cast into a spiral of unprecedented violence. My heart is torn at the sight of what is happening in the Holy Land, by the power of so much division and so much hatred. The whole world looks on at what is happening in that land with apprehension and pain. These are feelings that express special closeness and affection for the peoples who inhabit the land which has witnessed the history of Revelation.

Unfortunately, however, it must be noted that in public opinion worldwide, this war has also produced divisive attitudes, sometimes taking the form of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. I can only reiterate what my predecessors also clearly stated many times: the relationship that binds us to you is particular and singular, without ever obscuring, naturally, the relationship that the Church has with others and the commitment towards them too. The path that the Church has undertaken with you, the ancient people of the covenant, rejects every form of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, unequivocally condemning manifestations of hatred towards Jews and Judaism as a sin against God. Together with you, we, Catholics, are very concerned about the terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world. We had hoped that “never again” would be a refrain heard by the new generations, yet now we see that the path ahead requires ever closer collaboration to eradicate these phenomena.

My heart is close to you, to the Holy Land, to all the peoples who inhabit it, Israelis and Palestinians, and I pray that the desire for peace may prevail in all. I want you to know that you are close to my heart and to the heart of the Church. In the light of the numerous communications that have been sent to me by various

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2024/documents/20240202-lettera-ebrei-in-israele.html>

friends and Jewish organizations from all over the world and in the light of your own letter, which I greatly appreciate, I feel the desire to assure you of my closeness and affection. I embrace each of you, and especially those who are consumed by anguish, pain, fear and even anger. Words are so difficult to formulate in the face of a tragedy like the one that has occurred in recent months. Together with you, we mourn the dead, the wounded, the traumatized, begging God the Father to intervene and put an end to war and hatred, to these incessant cycles that endanger the entire world. In a special way we pray for the return of the hostages, rejoicing because of those who have already returned home, and praying that all the others will soon join them.

I would also like to add that we must never lose hope for a possible peace and that we must do everything possible to promote it, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust. We must look to God, the only source of certain hope. As I said 10 years ago: "History teaches that our own powers do not suffice. More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it. That is why we are here, because we know and we believe that we need the help of God. We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples. We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word 'brother'. But to be able to utter this word we have to lift our eyes to heaven and acknowledge one another as children of one Father" (Vatican Garden, 8 June 2014).

In times of desolation, we have great difficulty seeing a future horizon in which light replaces darkness, in which friendship replaces hatred, in which cooperation replaces war. However, we, as Jews and Catholics, are witnesses to precisely such a horizon. And we must act, starting first and foremost from the Holy Land, where together we want to work for peace and justice, doing everything possible to create relationships capable of opening new horizons of light for everyone, Israelis and Palestinians.

Together, Jews and Catholics, we must commit ourselves to this path of friendship, solidarity and cooperation in seeking ways to repair a destroyed world, working together in every part of the world, and especially in the Holy Land, to recover the ability to see in the face of every person the image of God, in which we were created.

We still have a lot to do together to ensure that the world we leave to those who come after us is a better one, but I am sure that we will be able to continue to work together towards this goal.

MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE ZAYED AWARD FOR HUMAN FRATERNITY*

Vatican City, 4 February 2024

To Mr Mohamed Abdelsalam
Secretary-General of the Zayed Award for Human Fraternity

On the occasion of the *2024 International Day of Human Fraternity*, which also marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of the *Document on Human Fraternity*, I send heartfelt greetings and sentiments of warm friendship to all present for this year's presentation of the Zayed Award.

It is encouraging to see that the journey of dialogue, companionship and mutual esteem which began in Abu Dhabi five years ago continues to bear fruit. I particularly wish to renew my gratitude to Dr Ahmad Al-Tayyib, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates for their vital support of initiatives aimed at promoting the values of fraternity and social comradeship founded on the truth that all human beings are not only created equal but are intrinsically connected as brothers and sisters, children of our one Father in heaven.

In a special way, I extend congratulations to the three joint recipients of this year's Award: the Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Organizations from Indonesia, Dr Magdi Yacoub from Egypt and Sister Nelly Leon from Chile. That these honourees have been selected from a great number of other candidates is yet another sign that the values celebrated and promoted on this day are resonating throughout our human family.

At the same time, however, we cannot fail to recognize the effects of an absence of fraternal solidarity being felt all too intensely by men and women everywhere and by our natural world. The negative impact of environmental destruction and social degradation continues to cause immense suffering for a vast number of our brothers and sisters around the globe. How timely, then, to draw attention to the principles that can guide humanity through the dark shadows of injustice, hatred and war into the brightness of a world community marked by those values that we see manifest in the varied efforts of this year's awardees. These include tolerant love for those who are different, a genuine care for the poor and sick, especially children, and a desire to assist the rehabilitation of prisoners and

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240204-messaggio-premio-zayed.html>

their reintegration into society. All of the joint recipients, in their own distinctive ways, cast important light on the path to greater social solidarity and fraternal love.

Yet no individual or human effort alone can advance progress on this journey. Indeed, the Zayed Award itself stands as a reminder that “without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity... For ‘reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity’” (Fratelli Tutti, 272). It is my prayer, then, that all who participate in the International Day may be encouraged not only by the example of the awardees’ good works but also by the religious insights and beliefs that inspired in them such generosity of heart.

Finally, in addressing those associated with the Zayed Award, I likewise extend my greeting and prayerful good wishes to each and every one of our brothers and sisters, especially those who are suffering in any way. May they know the closeness and concern of people of faith around the world. With these sentiments and with great affection, I willingly invoke upon all an abundance of divine blessings.

**MESSAGE TO THE 4th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PLURIEL,
THE UNIVERSITY PLATFORM FOR RESEARCH ON ISLAM
(Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 4-7 February 2024)***

From the Vatican, 4 February 2024

I send my warmest greetings to you who are taking part in this International Congress of Pluriel, the University Platform for Research on Islam, in Abu Dhabi, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* that I co-signed with my friend and brother, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib. On that occasion, we asked that “this Document become the object of research and reflection in all schools, universities and educational institutes of formation, thus helping to educate new generations to bring goodness and peace to others, and to be defenders everywhere of the rights of the oppressed and of the least of our brothers and sisters”. I therefore warmly congratulate the organizers of this academic meeting for the venue and theme they have chosen, “Impact and prospects of the Document”, at a time when fraternity and living together are being called into question by injustices and wars which — I

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240204-messaggio-pluriel.html>

would remind you — are always defeats of humanity. The roots of these evils are threefold: a lack of understanding of others, a failure to listen, and a lack of intellectual flexibility. Three flaws in the human spirit that destroy fraternity and that need to be properly identified if we are to rediscover wisdom and peace.

Firstly, a lack of understanding of others. Because the problems of today and tomorrow will remain unsolvable if we do not get to know and value each other, and if we remain isolated. Getting to know the other, building mutual trust, changing the negative image we may have of this “other”, who is my brother in humanity, in publications, speeches and teaching, is the way to initiate peace processes that are acceptable to all. Peace without an education based on respect and knowledge of the other has neither value nor future. If we do not want to build a civilization of the anti-brother, where “the other who is different” is perceived simply as an enemy, if, on the contrary, we want to build that longed-for world where dialogue is assumed as the path, joint collaboration as ordinary conduct, mutual knowledge as method and criterion (cf. *Document*), then the path to follow today is that of education for dialogue and encounter. As I said in my last Message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace dedicated to artificial intelligence, “peace is the fruit of relationships that recognize and welcome others in their inalienable dignity” (*Message for the 57th World Day of Peace 2024*, 8 December 2023). Human intelligence, for its part, is fundamentally relational: it can only flourish if it remains curious and open to all fields of reality, and if it knows how to communicate freely the fruit of its discoveries.

To do this, it is necessary to take the time to listen, to listen to my brother who is different, whom I have not chosen, so that I can live with him on the same earth. Lack of listening is the second trap that undermines fraternity. On the contrary: listen before speaking. “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God”, says Saint James (*Jm. 1:19-20*). How many evils would be avoided if there were more listening, silence and, at the same time, real words, in families, political or religious communities, even within universities and among peoples and cultures! Creating spaces where different opinions can be heard is not a waste of time, but a gain in humanity. Let us remember that “without encountering and relating to differences, it is hard to achieve a clear and complete understanding even of ourselves and of our native land. Other cultures are not ‘enemies’ from which we need to protect ourselves, but differing reflections of the inexhaustible richness of human life” (*FT, 147*). To debate, we need to learn to listen, that is to say, to be silent and slow down, in contrast to the current direction of our post-modern world, which is always hectic, full of images and noise. Debating while knowing how to listen and without giving in to emotion, without fearing “misunderstandings”, which will

always be present and are part of the game of encounter: this is what will enable us to reach a peaceful common vision to build fraternity.

But debate presupposes an education in intellectual flexibility. Education and research must aim to make the men and women of our peoples not rigid but flexible, alive, open to otherness, and fraternal. As I said at the International Conference for Peace organized at Al-Azhar, “Wisdom seeks the other, overcoming temptations to rigidity and closed-mindedness; it is open and in motion, at once humble and inquisitive; it is able to value the past and set it in dialogue with the present, while employing a suitable hermeneutics” (*Address to the participants in the International Peace Conference*, 28 April 2017). Dear brothers and sisters, let us ensure that our dream of fraternity in peace is not confined to words! The word “dialogue” is, in fact, extremely rich and cannot be limited to discussions around a table. “Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word ‘dialogue’” (*FT*, 198). Do not be afraid to step outside your disciplines, remain curious, cultivate flexibility, listen to the world; do not be afraid of this world, listen to your brother whom you have not chosen but whom God has put beside you to teach you to love. “For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (*1 Jn 4:20*).

Thank you for what you are already doing, as researchers, students, curious men and women who want to understand and change the world.

MESSAGE FOR THE TENTH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AND AWARENESS AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

8 February 2024

Journeying in Dignity: Listen, Dream, Act

[...]. Trafficking often goes unseen. The media, thanks also to courageous reporters, have brought to light modern forms of slavery, but the culture of indifference tends to desensitize us. Let us help one another to be more responsive, to open our lives and hearts to our sisters and brothers who even now are being bought and sold as slaves. It is never too late to take action.

Thank God, many young people have taken up the challenge of this World Day against trafficking. Their enthusiasm and commitment show us the way: they remind us that we are called to *listen*, *dream* and *act* in order to counter trafficking.

First, it is essential to *listen* to those who are suffering. I think of the victims of wars and conflicts, those affected by climate change, those forced to migrate, and

those, especially women and children, who are exploited sexually or in the workplace. May we listen to their cry for help and feel challenged by the stories they tell. Together with the victims and the young, let us once more *dream* of a world where all people can live with freedom and dignity.

Then, sisters and brothers, by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, let us make this dream a reality by taking *concrete actions* to combat trafficking. Let us pray fervently and work proactively for this cause, the defence of human dignity, whether by prayer and action as individuals and families, or as parish and religious communities, as ecclesial associations and movements, and also in the various spheres of social and political life.

We know that the fight against trafficking can be won, but it is necessary to get to the root of the problem and eliminate its causes. I encourage you, then, to respond to this appeal for *transformation*, in memory of Saint Josephine Bakhita, who stands for all those men and women who, despite their enslavement, can still attain freedom. It is a call to take action, to mobilize all our resources in combatting trafficking and restoring full dignity to those who have been its victims. If we close our eyes and ears, if we do nothing, we will be guilty of complicity.

**TO THE FIRST COLLOQUIUM BETWEEN THE DICASTERY
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND THE CONGRESS
OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS***

Hall of Popes, 4 April 2024

I welcome all of you on the occasion of your Colloquium, which brings together the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and, on the Kazakh side, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Senate of the Republic and the Nursultan Nazarbayev Centre for Interfaith and Intercivilization Dialogue. I am pleased to see in this event a first important fruit of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the Nazarbayev Centre and the Dicastery.

This meeting is an opportunity for me to recall the Seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, in which I took part when I travelled to Astana. The Congress is a unique and well-tested platform for dialogue not only among religious leaders, but also with the world of politics, culture and the media.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/april/documents/20240404-dialogo-interreligioso.html>

It is a praiseworthy initiative that fits well with Kazakhstan's vocation to be a *land of encounter*.

[...] We need to support each other in fostering harmony between religions, ethnic groups and cultures, a harmony of which your great country can be proud. In particular, I want to emphasize three aspects of your work: *respect for diversity*, *commitment to our "common home"* and the *promotion of peace*.

Finally, your meeting has a third aspect: the *promotion of peace*. Nowadays, many, too many, speak of war: bellicose rhetoric has sadly come back into fashion. This is terrible! Yet while words of hatred multiply, people are dying in brutal conflicts. We need instead to speak of peace, to dream of peace, to give creativity and substance to hopes for peace, for these are the real hopes of individuals and of peoples. Every effort should be made to do so, in dialogue with everyone. May your meeting, marked by respect for differences and with the aim of mutual enrichment, be an example of not seeing the other person as a threat, but as a gift and a valued partner for reciprocal growth.

TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF THE ITALIAN RED CROSS*

Paul VI Audience Hall, 6 April 2024

Your commitment, inspired by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary work, unity and universality, is also a visible sign that fraternity is possible. If the person is placed at the centre, it is possible to engage in dialogue, to work together for the common good, going beyond divisions, tearing down the walls of enmity, overcoming the logic of interest and power that blind us and turn others into enemies. For the believer, every person is sacred. Every human creature is loved by God and, for this reason, a holder of inalienable rights. Inspired by this conviction, many people of good will meet, recognizing the supreme value of life and hence the need to defend especially the most vulnerable.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/april/documents/20240406-croce-rossa.html>

TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION*

Concistory Hall, 11 April 2024

Inclusion: even if it is not a biblical word, it expresses well a salient feature of Jesus' style: his going in search of the sinner, the lost, the marginalized, the stigmatized, so that they may be welcomed in the house of the Father (cf. *Lk 15*). Let us think of the lepers: for Jesus, no one should be excluded from God's salvation (cf. *Mk 1:40-42*). But inclusion also embraces another aspect: the Lord wants the full person to be healed, in spirit, soul and body (cf. *1 Thess. 5:23*). For a physical healing from evil would be of little use without a healing of the heart from sin (cf. *Mk 2:17; Mt 10:28-29*). There is a total healing: body, soul and spirit.

This perspective of inclusion leads us to attitudes of sharing: Christ, who went among the people doing good and healing the sick, commanded his disciples to care for the sick and bless them in his name (cf. *Mt 10:8; Lk 10:9*), sharing with them his mission of consolation (cf. *Lk 4:18-19*). Therefore, through the experience of suffering and illness, we, as the Church, are called to walk together with all, in Christian and human solidarity, opening up opportunities for dialogue and hope in the name of our common frailty. The parable of the Good Samaritan "shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good" (*FT*, 67).

MESSAGE TO THE ALARABIYA NETWORK**

From the Vatican, 12 April 2024

I thank you for this opportunity to say a word to you at the end of Ramadan. This year, by a happy coincidence, the month sacred to Islam ends only a few days after the celebration of Easter, the most important religious feast for Christians.

This happy occasion, which invites us to lift our eyes to heaven and to worship the Lord, "merciful and almighty" (*Nostra Aetate*, 3), stands in sharp contrast

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/april/documents/20240411-plenaria-pcb.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240412-messaggio-network-alarabiya.html>

with the sorrow we feel for the blood presently being shed in the blessed lands of the Middle East.

Brothers and sisters, our father Abraham raised his eyes to heaven to gaze at the stars. The light of life, which shines all around us and embraces us from on high, calls us to leave behind the dark night of hatred, so that, in accordance with the Creator's will, stars may shine brightly upon our world, rather than the glare of missiles lighting up the heavens and raining down fire to devastate the earth!

God is peace and he desires peace. Those who believe in him cannot fail to repudiate war, which does not resolve but only increases hostilities. War, as I never tire of saying, is always and only a failure: it is a road leading nowhere; it does not open new vistas, but stifles all hope.

[...]. Friends, I believe that deserts can flower: as in nature, so too in the hearts of individuals and in the lives of peoples. Yet the deserts of hatred can bring forth shoots of hope only if we learn how to grow together, one alongside the other; only if we learn to respect the beliefs of others; only if we recognize the right to existence of every people and the right of every people to have their own State; only if we learn how to live in peace without demonizing anyone. That is my belief and my hope, which I share with the Christians who, amid not a few difficulties, are living throughout the Middle East. I embrace them and I encourage them, and I ask that they enjoy always and everywhere the right and ability to profess freely their faith, which speaks of peace and fraternity.

TO THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS OF THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF "SCHOOLS FOR PEACE"*

Paul VI Audience Hall, 19 April 2024

Dear students, dear teachers, you have placed two keywords at the heart of your commitment: peace and care. They are two interconnected realities: indeed, peace is not merely the silence of weapons and the absence of war; it is a climate of benevolence, trust and love that can mature in a society based on relations of care, in which individualism, distraction and indifference give way to the capacity to pay attention to others, to listen to them in their fundamental needs, to heal their wounds, to be instruments of compassion and healing for him or her. This is the care that Jesus has towards humanity, in particular towards the most fragile,

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/april/documents/20240419-scuole-di-pace.html>

and of which the Gospel speaks often. From mutual “caring”, an inclusive society, founded on peace and dialogue, is born.

In this time, still marked by war, I ask you to be artisans of peace; in a society still imprisoned by the throwaway culture, I ask you to be protagonists of inclusion; in a world traversed by global crises, I ask you to be builders of the future, so that our common home may become a place of fraternity.

MEETING WITH THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION “WITH OPEN ARMS”*

Saint Peter’s Square, 25 April 2024

[...] the most important thing about this Synod is synodality. The topics, the themes, are to carry forward this expression of the Church, which is synodality. For this there is a need for synodal men and women, who know how to engage in dialogue, to interrelate, to search together. There is a need for people forged by the Spirit, for “pilgrims of hope”, as the theme of the Jubilee that is now close at hand says, men and women capable of tracing and treading new and challenging paths. I invite you, therefore, to be “athletes and standard-bearers of synodality” [...]

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF PRIMATES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION**

Thursday, 2 May 2024

Dear Primates of the Anglican Communion, thank you for choosing to meet this year in the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul. It is a gift for me to feel close to the communities that you represent. I realize that the role of the Bishop of Rome is still a controversial and divisive issue among Christians. Yet, in the splendid phrase of Pope Gregory the Great, who sent Saint Augustine as a missionary to England, the Bishop of Rome is *servus servorum Dei*, the servant of the servants of God. Again, in the words of John Paul II, “this designation is the best possible safeguard against the risk of separating power (and in particular the primacy) from ministry. Such a separation would contradict the very meaning of power according

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/april/documents/20240425-azione-cattolica.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240502-primati-comunione-anglicana.html>

to the Gospel: ‘I am among you as one who serves’ (*Lk 22:27*)”. [Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*, 88.] For this reason, it is necessary to engage in “a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind”, [*Ibid.*, 96.] strives to understand how the Petrine ministry can develop as a service of love for all. Thanks be to God, positive results have been achieved in the various ecumenical dialogues on the question of primacy as a “gift to be shared”. [ARCIC II, *The Gift of Authority*, 60]

As you know, the Catholic Church is engaged in a synodal journey. I rejoice that so many fraternal delegates, including a bishop of the Anglican Communion, took part in the first session of the General Assembly held last year, and I look forward to further ecumenical participation in the session to be held this autumn. I pray that a better understanding of the role of the Bishop of Rome will be among the fruits of the Synod. The Synthesis Report at the end of the first session called for a deeper study of the link between synodality and primacy at various levels, local, regional and universal. The most recent work of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission may prove a helpful resource in this regard.

So let us pray, journey and work together, with confidence and hope. The 2016 Joint Declaration stated that, “while, like our predecessors, we ourselves do not yet see solutions to the obstacles before us, we are undeterred. In our trust and joy in the Holy Spirit, we are confident that dialogue and engagement with one another will deepen our understanding and help us to discern the mind of Christ for his Church. We trust in God’s grace and providence, knowing that the Holy Spirit will open new doors and lead us into all truth.” (*Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope Francis and His Grace Justin Welby*, 5 October 2016)

TO THE INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM “RÉPARER L’IRRÉPARABLE”*

Clementine Hall, 4 May 2024

Reparation, to be Christian, to touch the heart of the offended person and not to be a simple act of commutative justice, presupposes two demanding attitudes: recognizing oneself as guilty and asking for forgiveness.

Recognizing oneself as guilty. Any reparation, human or spiritual, begins with acknowledgment of one’s own sin. “Self-accusation is part of Christian wisdom; this pleases the Lord, because the Lord welcomes the contrite heart” (*Homily at*

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240504-reparer-irreparable.html>

Mass at Santa Marta, 6 March 2018). It is from this honest acknowledgment of the wrong done to one's brother or sisters, and from the profound and sincere sentiment that love has been harmed, that the desire to make amends arises.

Asking for forgiveness. It is the confession of evil committed, following the example of the prodigal son who says to the Father: "I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (*Lk 15:21*). Asking for forgiveness reopens dialogue and manifests the will to re-establish the bond of fraternal charity. And reparation – even a beginning of reparation or simply the will to make amends – guarantees the authenticity of the request for forgiveness, it expresses its depth, its sincerity, it touches the heart of the brother, consoling him and inspiring in him acceptance of the forgiveness requested. Therefore, if the irreparable cannot be completely repaired, love can always be reborn, making the wound bearable.

**MESSAGE TO THE "I CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE HERMANDADES
Y PIEDAD POPULAR"**

(Seville, 4 - 8 December 2024)

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 9 May 2024

Through these words I would like to join in the study days on fraternity and popular piety that you are holding in this city of Seville, cradle of saints and of a people who live with fervour the expressions of their faith to the point of making them consubstantial to their social fabric.

I would like to highlight three challenges in your programme, proposing them as a *trisañon*, a plea that we raise to God, asking the Father for the evangelizing effectiveness of our efforts, the Son for the beauty of our witness of life, and the Holy Spirit for a heart full of hidden charity that allows us to reach out to people, even silently.

[...]. All different and all united, hence a sublime beauty. How endearing to see the children in their children's costumes, doing children's work: carrying the water, the baskets of incense, feeling important in what they do, and at the same time longing to be able to grow up, and to wear the costume of the grown-ups, to be able to carry the cross, to be able to place themselves under the mantle of their Blessed Mother. The beauty of this diversity is also a school, it is a path: Saint Manuel began dancing before the throne of the *Corpus Domini* and he dedicated his whole life as a bishop and saint to serving it.

On the other hand, its *beauty* is perceived in that perfect union that is born

of the combination of so many peculiarities, ministries, works, that with tenacity and patience are blended together. Above all, it is the *beauty* of Christ that summons us, calls us to be brothers and sisters and urges us to take Christ out into the streets, to bring him to the people, so that everyone can contemplate his beauty. What a joy it is to see the procession walk, accompanied by the rhythm of silent prayer, which overwhelms the heart of those who see it. Whether one carries, or simply accompanies, whether one wears a penitential habit, or a rosary, it is the same fervour, the same love, notes of the same score that only together can form a song of praise.

Saint Manuel assures us: “Alas, gentlemen, the people [...] are hungry for truth, for affection, for well-being, for justice, for heaven and, perhaps, without realizing it, for God” and “the tears of his heart” (*idem*, no. 1900), the heart-rending tears of his soul, cannot leave us unmoved. Our imaginary penitential station continues on its way to the Holy Church Cathedral, to the Tabernacle where the Lord awaits us, before Him we present these hearts, so that God the Father may make the seed we have tried to sow grow. This living Bread is the only one that can satisfy the hunger of our society, a Bread that was born to be given, to be consumed, and that from the altar calls us to dialogue with Him, to be our consolation and our rest.

As a people on the move, in almost martial order, whether carrying their cross or under the mantle of their blessed Mother, we feel that we are God’s field, the seed of the kingdom, and it is in his presence that we return to our homes, to continue to reveal this joy, this beauty, this overflowing love, which is communicated to our children, to our families, friends, neighbours. It is in that intimate moment that we ask Jesus to give you the strength to join us in this pilgrimage, of procession and of life, together we will continue to carry Christ, taking him out into the streets so that he may enter into all hearts.

BULL OF INDICATION OF THE ORDINARY JUBILEE OF THE YEAR 2025

Spes non confundit*

Saint John Lateran, Rome, 9 May 2024

8. The first sign of hope should be the desire for *peace* in our world, which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of *war*. Heedless of the horrors of

* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/20240509_spes-non-confundit_bolla-giubileo2025.html

the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those peoples, who have already endured so much? How is it possible that their desperate plea for help is not motivating world leaders to resolve the numerous regional conflicts in view of their possible consequences at the global level? Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death? May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called “children of God” (*Mt 5:9*). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken. May diplomacy be tireless in its commitment to seek, with courage and creativity, every opportunity to undertake negotiations aimed at a lasting peace.

**TO THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SOCIETIES
FOR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY (INSECT)***

Friday, 10 May 2024

Thank you for the interdisciplinary work that you carry out through research projects and congresses, and by your encouragement of ecumenism and dialogue with other religions and worldviews.

Theology is indeed a significant and necessary ecclesial ministry. In the first place, because it is part of our Catholic faith to explain the reason for our hope to all those who ask (cf. *1 Pet 3:15*). And we know that hope is not an emotion or a feeling, but the very person of Jesus, who is himself “the way, and the truth and the life” (*Jn. 14:6*).

Theology is also important because of the epochal changes that we are experiencing in our increasingly multi-ethnic and mobile societies marked by the interconnectedness of different peoples, languages and cultural backgrounds. These changes need to be critically assessed in an effort to help build a future of peace, solidarity and universal brotherhood (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*), to say nothing of care for our common home (cf. *Laudato Si'*).

We also need theology because the challenges posed by progress in science and technology – we need think only of artificial intelligence – are presently forcing us to work towards a common understanding of what it means to be human, what is worthy of our nature as human beings, what aspect of our humanity is irreducible because it is divine, that is, made in the image and likeness of God in

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240510-insect.html>

Christ. Here, theology must be able to serve as a companion to the sciences and other critical disciplines, offering its specific sapiential contribution to ensuring that different cultures do not clash but become, in dialogue, symphonic.

In this light, dear friends, I would like to point to three guidelines for theology: creative fidelity to tradition, a cross-disciplinary approach and collegiality (cf. *Address to the International Theological Commission*, 4 November 2022). These are the essential “ingredients” of the vocation of Catholic theologians in the heart of the Church. For theologians, are like the scouting party sent by Joshua to explore the land of Canaan: they are charged with finding the right paths towards the inculturation of the faith.

As we all know, Tradition is living. Consequently, it must increase and incarnate the Gospel in every land and in all cultures. The Gospel proclaims the event of Jesus, who died and rose again, and is wisdom for the life of all peoples. Theology is the discipline that deals with human existence; its light must enter the fabric of every reality investigated by the sciences. A cross-disciplinary approach is not, therefore, a fad of the moment, but an intrinsic demand of theological science, which is called to “listen” to discoveries made in other fields of knowledge in order to deepen our understanding of the doctrines of faith, while at the same time offering Christian wisdom for a human development of the sciences. The responsibility for this arduous task necessarily calls for collegiality and synodality in the work of research.

TO THE WORLD MEETING ON HUMAN FRATERNITY*

Clementine Hall, 11 May 2024

You have come from many parts of the world to take part in the *World Meeting on Human Fraternity*. I thank the Fratelli Tutti Foundation, which seeks to promote the principles set forth in the Encyclical, “in order to encourage initiatives linked to spirituality, art, education and dialogue with the world, around Saint Peter’s Basilica and in the embrace of its colonnade” (*Chirograph*, 8 December 2021).

In a world facing the fires of conflict, you have come together with the intention of reaffirming your “no” to war and “yes” to peace, bearing witness to the humanity that unites us and makes us recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters, in the mutual gift of our respective cultural differences.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240511-world-meeting.html>

In this regard, I am reminded of a famous address of Martin Luther King, Jr., who said: “We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers” (*Nobel Lecture*, 11 December 1964). Indeed, that is true. Let us ask ourselves, then: how can we, concretely, return to building up the art of a coexistence that is truly humane?

I would like to go back to the key disposition proposed in *Fratelli tutti*: compassion. In the Gospel (cf. *Lk. 10:25-37*), Jesus tells the parable of a Samaritan who, moved by compassion, approaches a Jew whom robbers have left half-dead by the side of the road. Let us look at these two men. Their cultures were at odds, their histories different and contentious, but one became a brother to the other the moment he allowed himself to be guided by the compassion he felt for him. We could say that he allowed himself to be drawn to Jesus present in that wounded man. It is like the poet who, in one of his works, has Saint Francis of Assisi say: “The Lord is where your brothers are” (É. Leclerc, *La sapienza di un povero*).

In the afternoon you will meet at twelve points in Vatican City and Rome, to manifest your goal of creating an outgoing movement of fraternity. In this context, the working groups that have been preparing over the past few months will present some proposals to civil society, centred on the dignity of the human person, in order to craft sound policies, based on the principle of fraternity, which “in turn enhances freedom and equality” (*Fratelli tutti*, 103). I am pleased by this choice and encourage you to go forward in your work of silent sowing. From it can come a *Charter of Humanity*, which includes, along with rights, the behaviours and practical reasons for what makes us more human.

I urge you not to be discouraged, because “persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine” (*Fratelli tutti*, 198).

In particular, I would like to thank the group of distinguished Nobel Laureates present, both for the Declaration on Human Fraternity drafted on 10 June last year and for your commitment this year in reconstructing a grammar of humanity, on which to base choices and behaviour. I encourage you to move forward, to build up this spirituality of fraternity and to promote, through diplomatic activity, the role of multilateral bodies.

Dear brothers and sisters, war is a deception – war is always a defeat –, as is the idea of international security based on the deterrent of fear. This too is a deception. To ensure lasting peace, we must return to a recognition of our common humanity and place fraternity at the centre of peoples’ lives. Only in this way will we succeed in developing a model of coexistence capable of giving the human family a future. Political peace needs peace of hearts, so that people can come together in the confidence that life always overcomes all forms of death.

Dear friends, in greeting you I am thinking also of the embrace that will be

shared this evening, as it was last year, by so many young people. Let us look at them and learn from them, for, as the Gospel teaches us, unless “you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (*Mt 18:3*). Let us all make this embrace a commitment in our lives and a prophetic gesture of love.

**TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, CHICAGO***

Hall of Popes, 20 May 2024

I encourage you to cultivate your intellectual curiosity – which is not idle chatter or gossip, which is harmful, no, cultivate intellectual curiosity – your spirit of cooperation and your sensitivity to the challenges of contemporary times, carrying on the legacy of Saint Ignatius. We need men and women who are ready to put their skills at the service of others, to work for a future in which each person can achieve his or her potential and live with dignity and respect, and in which the world can find peace. I am very much struck by this today: amidst the crisis in the global order the thought of a possible future seems to be lacking. And without hope we cannot live. Let us not forget hope, which is an anchor on the shore and we cling to its rope. Hope never disappoints!

I commend to you especially intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a means of fostering mutual understanding, cooperation and the building of bridges between different traditions, cultures and worldviews.

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES**

Consistory Hall, 25 May 2024

Since a journey of missionary conversion is necessary for everyone, it is essential that opportunities for personal and communal formation be provided in order to grow in the dimension of “communal” missionary spirituality. The purpose of the Church’s mission is “making everyone know and live the ‘new’ communion

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240520-loyola-university-chicago.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240525-pom.html>

that the Son of God made man has introduced into the history of the world” (*Praedicate Evangelium*, I, 4). [1] Let us not forget that the call to communion implies a synodal style: this means walking together, listening to each other, engaging in dialogue, even arguing, but always as a community. This expands our hearts, and fosters that increasingly universal outlook which was emphasized at the founding of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith: “We must not think only of this or that mission in particular, but of all the missions and missionary initiatives throughout the world” (cf. Mons. Christiani - J. Servel, *Marie-Pauline Jaricot*, 39).

**TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON YOUTH MINISTRY
OF THE DICASTERY FOR THE LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE***

Clementine Hall, 25 May 2024

As I think about the Jubilee for Youth next year and WYD in Seoul three years from now, my “dream” is that these events will help many of the young, including those who are not ordinarily churchgoers, to encounter Jesus, and to hear the Gospel’s message of hope. I think of those young people who are downcast, who no longer lift their eyes to the horizon, who have put aside their great dreams and are now trapped in disillusionment and overwhelmed by the problems of life. Asia is a young continent, full of life, yet many young people, especially in the large cities, are suffering from a loss of hope and withdrawing into themselves, with few relationships, few interests. The same thing is happening all over the world. The events in Rome and Seoul are God-given opportunities for us to say to young people throughout the world that Jesus is hope, for you, for us, and for everyone!

As you prepare for these two great events, you must not neglect the ordinary paths, that is, the journey of young people in their everyday lives. I mean the kind of pastoral care made up of small steps, small numbers, simple words and actions, everyday decisions and moments of celebration and prayer in community. These may be less spectacular experiences, but they are the ones that touch hearts and bear lasting fruit over time. This is the holiness in daily life that I spoke about in *Gaudete et exsultate*. Not to advertise my own writings, but read *Gaudete et Exsultate*, it is a hymn to joy. Joy should be the Christian’s sustenance, the true expression of a Christian, and if you don’t know what joy is, go in front of the mirror and you’ll start laughing after a little bit!

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240525-pastorale-giovanile-congresso.html>

In this regard, I would like to mention several things that should never be lacking in the day-to-day work of youth ministry. First, young people need to be helped to arrive at certain basic certainties in life, truths of the heart: “God is love,” “Christ saves you”, “He lives”, and “the Spirit gives life.” These are the certainties but there is also another: Our Lady loves you because she is a mother. We must never tire of proclaiming these four or five simple truths (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 112-133). Young people may be concerned about the bad news that bombards us daily, yet that should not obscure their certainty that the risen Christ is with them and is more powerful than any evil. I’m not saying the news, or publicizing the wars, but we think about them because young people are sensitive to this. Christ is alive! Everything that lives is in his hands. He alone knows the future of our world and of our individual lives. It is important to offer young people opportunities to experience the living Christ through prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, community gatherings, service to the poor and the testimony of the lives of the saints. Young people who have had this experience become convincing witnesses of the message of the Gospel.

Another essential element is spiritual discernment (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 278-298). Discernment is an art that pastoral ministers must be the first to learn: priests and religious, catechists and adult guides, and young people who accompany other young people. It is a skill that cannot be improvised, but has to be cultivated, experienced and lived. For a young person, to find someone capable of discernment is to find a treasure. In the journey of faith and the discovery of one’s vocation, a wise guide helps avoid many mistakes, much naiveté, many moments of bewilderment and “paralysis”. A guide does not take away freedom but accompanies. I devoted a series of Wednesday Audience talks to discernment; you can go and look them up because they explain how discernment is conducted. Here I would like to highlight only three aspects of discernment: it is synodal, it is personal and it is directed to the truth.

Synodal. In these days of rampant individualism, everyone goes their own way, everyone determines what is meaningful in life, everyone establishes their own values, their own truths. We can see this in the categorization of “like” and “dislike”. It is an ugly individualism. On the other hand, in the practice of discernment, the Church sets our brothers and sisters in the faith alongside us, to journey together, not alone, and thus our interior growth is greatly enriched. In this sense, discernment is synodal.

At the same time, discernment is personal. In our world, everything has become mass-produced and standardized. Young people, instead, need to be accompanied personally, as individuals. Each one of them is unique, and each deserves to be listened to, understood and given advice suited to his or her age as well as human and spiritual maturity. Discernment must necessarily be personal. The other

day, I had a meeting in a parish with about sixty teenagers, I was pleased with the questions they were asking, seeking questions of opening up to the Lord and of doubt. It is about listening and helping to move forward.

Finally, discernment is also truth-oriented. We live in a society that is poisoned by fake news, where personal profiles are often tailored or falsified, where people create alternative identities, discernment represents for young people a path to authenticity: a way of emerging from artificial identities and discovering their true identity. Discernment is about being “real”: before oneself, before others, and before God. We sometimes laugh when we see that women wear make-up, they have to look good, that’s why they wear makeup. But how often do we all apply make-up on the soul to appear what we are not. Be careful about this. Stay true before others, before God, and before ourselves.

Let me conclude on the importance of continuing to listen to young people. A real listening, not one that is “half-hearted” or merely “window dressing”. Young people should not be pushed into promoting ideas and activities already decided by others, or that do not really meet their needs. Young people should be empowered, involved in dialogue, in planning activities, in decisions. They should be made to feel that they are an active and full part of the life of the Church; and above all that they are called to be the first to bring the Gospel message to their peers.

TO THE BUDDHIST MONKS FROM THAILAND*

Clementine Hall, 27 May 2024

Speaking of recent events that have invigorated our established friendship, I was delighted to hear about the *Seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium* held in Thailand last November, which brought together more than 150 participants from various parts of Asia to reflect on the theme “Karuna and Agape in Dialogue for the Healing of a Wounded Humanity and the Earth”. Today humanity and the Earth, our common home, are indeed wounded! So many wars, so many people who have lost everything and have been forced to flee. So many children affected by violence. Yet, as you pointed out during the gathering, “we strongly believe that in the midst of dark clouds, those who are deeply rooted in their respective religious traditions and willing to work together with everyone can bring a ray of hope

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240527-monaci-buddisti.html>

to a desperate humanity” (*Final Statement*. Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Seventh Buddhist-Christian Colloquium, 16 November 2023).

During the Colloquium, you emphasized three key points that I would like to reiterate: first, you stated that “no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together, since we are interconnected and interdependent”. In light of this truth, I urge you to work together with everyone: civil society, members of other religions, governments, international organizations, academic and scientific communities and all other interested parties to promote a friendship that sustains peace and fraternity and builds a more inclusive world. Second, you stressed the importance of educating everyone, especially young people and children, “in caring and sharing relationships with one another and the environment”. Finally, you stated, “we believe that prayer and meditation can turn things upside down by purifying our hearts and minds; generating loving-kindness, mercy and forgiveness where there is hatred and vengeance creating a spirit of respect and care for the other and the earth”. I am very pleased that you will pray for peace tomorrow in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

I sincerely thank you for the kind gesture of coming to the Vatican and encourage you to continue fostering dialogue and cooperation, especially with the Catholic Church in Thailand, in a spirit of lasting friendship. Upon you and upon all the people of your noble country I invoke abundant divine blessings. Thank you very much!

MESSAGE FOR THE 103rd GERMAN CATHOLIC DAY (KATHOLIKENTAG)
Erfurt, 29 May -2 June 2024*

From the Vatican, 29 May 2024

[...] The many moral, social, economic and political crises we are experiencing are all interconnected. Care for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, the protection of life and the family, the defence of the dignity of all human life as well as outer and inner peace all belong together. The problems affect everyone and can only be solved together. Accordingly, a broad-based dialogue with as many voices as possible is required at all levels of social, economic and political life. The numerous discussion events at the *Katholikentag*, with many high-level representatives from important areas of social life, offer a good opportunity for this.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240529-messaggio-cattolici-tesdeschi.html>

In this context, it is wonderful and important that the Katholikentag is also a place of ecumenical togetherness and interreligious dialogue. After all, we need to work together with all people of good will who are prepared to build a peaceful future. Just how powerful the joint witness of Christians can be was experienced in 1989, when people of peace, candle in hand, triggered the Peaceful Revolution. Here in Erfurt, the prayers for peace took place in the Lorenzkirche and in the Protestant Predigerkirche. This miracle of peaceful change, triggered by praying people, shows us what prayer can do. And so, this remembrance also encourages us today!

The man of peace has a future. [...]

**TO PARTICIPANTS IN “DIALOGUES FOR FULLY SUSTAINABLE FINANCE”,
ORGANIZED BY THE CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE FOUNDATION***

Consistory Hall, 3 June 2024

I greet the president, the members of the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation, and those who are participating in the “Dialogues” it has organized in collaboration with *Prospera-Progetto Speranza*.

I read with interest the results of the work you have been carrying out in these two years, in order to launch a dialogue between finance, humanism and religion: it is not easy. You have chosen to begin these “Dialogues” with exponents of the Italian financial system. An economist told me once: dialogue between economics and philosophy, religion and humanism is possible. Dialogue between finance, theology and humanism, on the other hand, is very difficult. This is curious! This Italian finance system has an ancient history behind it, in which, for example, the “Monti di Pietà” were a great boost to help the poorest without falling into the logic of welfarism, and provided loans to enable people to be able to work and, through their activity, regain their dignity. Indeed, “helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’*, 128).

I was struck by the primary aim you have set yourselves: namely, to reason together with the upper echelons of the world of finance on the possibility that the commitment to do well and the commitment to do good can go hand in hand. In

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240603-finanza-sostenibile.html>

other words, you have set yourselves a noble task: to combine effectiveness and efficiency with integral sustainability, inclusion and ethics. You rightly say that your belief is that the Church's social magisterium can be a compass. For this to actually happen, it is necessary not to stop at the exhortatory moment, but to be able to look at the functioning of finance, to expose weaknesses and imagine concrete corrective measures.

Let me give an example. In the so-called *siglo de oro* – the sixteenth century – the wool trade in Spain was a flourishing market that moved large amounts of economic capital. The Spanish theologians of that time debated on that trade and gave ethical evaluations that changed as the historical context changed. In fact, the war in Flanders meant that those who worked directly in cattle breeding and shearing no longer received adequate payment for their work, and so they denounced that financial system, showing its weaknesses and demanding greater fairness. The Spanish theologians were able to intervene because they knew that labour process, and so they did not just say, “We must seek the common good, but explained what was wrong and demanded specific actions for change, for the common good, one understands.

You know financial procedures, and this is your great asset, but at the same time it is also a great responsibility. It is up to you to figure out how to make injustice decrease: I repeat, to make injustice decrease. Because “a financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders... Money must serve, not rule!” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 58). I once heard a political critic say: “In this country you rule from your pockets”: it is bad!

You have worked on three levels: thought, concreteness and valuing the good. I agree that you must never lose sight of concreteness, because at stake is the fate of the poorest, of people who struggle to find the means for a dignified life.

The work you have done in Milan is encouraging, and perhaps it might be a good thing to extend it to other financial centres, promoting a model of Dialogue that spreads and engenders a paradigm shift. Indeed, the technocratic paradigm remains dominant; there is a need for a new culture, capable of making room for a suitably solid ethics, culture and spirituality (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 105).

Thank you for the work you have done and are doing. Thank you to *Centesimus Annus* for its initiative! I encourage you to continue and to spread this method and this style. Dialogue is always the best way, also to improve the common home. I bless you and I ask you to pray for me.

TO THE INTERRELIGIOUS CONFERENCE OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT*

Clementine Hall, 3 June 2024

I express my gratitude for the perseverance with which the Work of Mary continues the journey begun by Chiara Lubich, fostering unity with people of non-Christian religions who share the spirituality of unity. This was a revolutionary journey that did much good for the Church. It is an experience animated by the Holy Spirit, rooted, we can say, in the heart of Christ, in his thirst for love, communion and fraternity.

Indeed, it is the Spirit who opens paths of dialogue and encounter, at times surprising ones. This happened more than fifty years ago in Algeria, when an all-Muslim community adhering to the Movement was born. It also happened with Chiara Lubich's meetings with leaders of various religions: Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, and others. This dialogue has flourished over time, as evidenced by your presence today.

The foundation of this experience is the love of God expressed through mutual love, listening, trust, hospitality and getting to know one another, all the while fully respecting each other's identities. Over time, friendship and cooperation have grown in seeking to respond together to the cry of the poor, in caring for creation and in working for peace. Through this journey, some non-Christian brothers and sisters have shared in the spirituality of the Work of Mary, or in some of its characteristic traits, and live according to them amongst their own people. With these men and women, we transcend dialogue, we feel like brothers and sisters, sharing the dream of a more united world, in the harmony of diversity.

Dear friends, your witness is a source of joy and a source of consolation, especially in this time of conflict, when religion is often misused in order to fuel division. Indeed, interreligious dialogue "is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 250). I encourage you, then, to move forward and always be open.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240603-interreligioso-focolari.html>

TO THE MEETING “ADDRESSING THE DEBT CRISIS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH”*

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall, 5 June 2024

I greet Cardinal Turkson, the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, together with all of you who are taking part in the meeting on “Addressing the Debt Crisis in the Global South”. Your gathering aims to engage in a dialogue on the implementation of policies to help solve the debt problem that afflicts many countries in the global South and likewise afflicts millions of families and individuals around the world.

It is not just any kind of financing that is useful to people, but one that implies a shared responsibility between those who receive it and those who provide it. The benefit such financing can bring to society depends on its conditions, on how it is used and on the frameworks in which the debt crises that may arise are resolved.

In the wake of mismanaged globalization, and in wake of the pandemic and wars, we find ourselves faced with a debt crisis that mainly affects the countries of the global South, causing misery and distress, and depriving millions of people of the possibility of a dignified future. Consequently, no government can morally require that its people suffer deprivations incompatible with human dignity.

In order to try to break the debt-financing cycle, it is necessary to create a multinational mechanism, based on the solidarity and harmony of peoples, that takes into account the global nature of the problem and its economic, financial and social implications. The absence of such a mechanism favours the mentality of “every person for himself or herself”, where the weakest always lose.

In line with the teachings of my predecessors, I want to reiterate that it is the principles of justice and solidarity that will lead to finding solutions. On this path, it is essential to act in good faith and with truth, following an international code of conduct with ethical standards that can guide dialogue between parties. So let us think of a new international financial architecture that is bold and creative.

During the Jubilee of the Year 2000, Saint John Paul II said that the issue of foreign debt “is not only economic but involves fundamental ethical principles and should have a place in international law”. He also recognized that “the Jubilee can be an appropriate occasion for gestures of good will [...], to reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt [...] for the common good” (*General Audience*, 3 November 1999). The Jubilee Year was a tradition among the Jew-

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240605-incontro-pas.html>

ish people, a year in which debts were forgiven. I would like to echo this prophetic appeal, which is more urgent now than ever, bearing in mind that ecological debt and external debt are two sides of the same coin that mortgages the future. Therefore, dear friends, the forthcoming Holy Year of 2025 calls us to open our minds and hearts to be able to untie the knots of those bonds that strangle the present, without forgetting that we are only custodians and stewards, not masters.

I invite you to dream and act together in the responsible building up of our common home; we cannot inhabit it with a clear conscience when we know that around us is a multitude of brothers and sisters who are hungry and mired in social exclusion and in vulnerability. To let this pass is a sin, a human sin. Even if one does not have faith, it is a social sin. What you are doing here is important and I pray for you.

**TO THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVOCATION FOR PEACE
IN THE HOLY LAND***

Vatican Gardens, 7 June 2024

I thank you for coming here to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Invocation for Peace in the Holy Land. Thank you.

At that time, the late President of the State of Israel, Shimon Peres, and the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, accepted my invitation to come here to implore from God the gift of peace. Some weeks prior to that, I had been a pilgrim in the Holy Land and had expressed a great desire that these two leaders might meet, in order to carry out a significant and historic gesture of dialogue and peace. I still give immense and heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for that day, and I cherish the memory of the emotional embrace exchanged by the two Presidents, in the presence of the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew, and representatives of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities in Jerusalem.

Today, it is important to remember that event, especially in light of what is sadly happening in Palestine and in Israel. For months now, we have witnessed an escalating wave of hostility, and we see many people, many innocent people dying before our eyes. All this suffering, the brutality of war, the violence it unleashes and the hatred it sows even among future generations should convince us all that

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240607-commemorazione.html>

“every war leaves our world worse than it was before. War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 261).

For this reason, instead of deceiving ourselves that war can resolve problems and bring about peace, we need to be vigilant and critical towards an ideology that is unfortunately dominant today, which claims that “conflict, violence and breakdown are part of the normal functioning of a society” (*ibid.*, 236). What is really at stake are the power struggles between different social groups, partisan economic interests, and international political manoeuvres aimed at an apparent peace yet fleeing from real problems.

At a time marked by tragic conflicts, there is need for a renewed commitment to building a peaceful world. To all, believers and people of good will, I wish to say: let us not cease to dream of peace and to build relationships of peace!

Every day I pray that this war will finally end. I think of all who suffer in Israel and in Palestine: Christians, Jews and Muslims. I think of how urgent it is that from the rubble of Gaza a decision to stop the weapons will finally arise, and therefore I ask that there be a ceasefire. I think of the families and of the Israeli hostages and ask that they be released as soon as possible. I think of the Palestinian population and ask that they be protected and receive all necessary humanitarian aid. I think of the many who are displaced due to the fighting and ask that their homes be rebuilt soon so that they can return to them in peace. I think too of those Palestinians and Israelis of good will who, amid tears and suffering, continue to hope for the coming of a new day and strive to bring forth the dawn of a peaceful world where all peoples “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (*Is 2:4*).

All of us must work and commit ourselves to achieving a lasting peace, where the State of Palestine and the State of Israel can live side by side, breaking down the walls of enmity and hatred. We must all cherish Jerusalem so that it will become the city of fraternal encounter among Christians, Jews and Muslims, protected by a special internationally guaranteed status.

Brothers and sisters, we are here today in order to pray for peace. Let us ask God for this, as a gift of his mercy. Indeed, peace is not made only by written agreements or by human and political compromises. It is born from transformed hearts, and arises when each of us has encountered and been touched by God’s love, which dissolves our selfishness, shatters our prejudices and grants us the taste and joy of friendship, fraternity and mutual solidarity. There can be no peace if we do not let God himself first disarm our hearts, making them hospitable, compassionate and merciful. These are the attributes of God: hospitable closeness, compassion and mercy. God is near, compassionate and merciful.

This evening, then, we wish to renew our intercession, once again raising to God our prayer for peace, as we did ten years ago. We wish to ask the Lord to give continued growth to the olive tree we planted on that day, which has already become strong and flourishing because it has been sheltered from the wind and watered with care. Likewise, we must ask God that peace may spring forth in the heart of every person, in every people and nation, in every corner of the earth, protected from the winds of war and nourished by those who daily strive to live in fraternity.

May we not stop dreaming of peace, which gives us the unexpected joy of feeling part of the one human family. Several days ago, in Verona, I saw this joy on the faces of those two fathers, an Israeli and a Palestinian, who embraced each other in front of everyone. This is what Israel and Palestine need: an embrace of peace!

Let us ask the Lord that the leaders of nations and the parties in conflict may find the way to peace and unity. May we all recognize each other as brothers and sisters. Let us ask the Lord for this, and through the intercession of Mary, the young woman of Nazareth and Queen of Peace, let us repeat the prayer we made ten years ago:

Lord God of peace, hear our prayer! We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried... But our efforts have been in vain. Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace; guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts, and give us the courage to say: "Never again war!"; "With war everything is lost". Instil in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace. Amen.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarrelling into forgiveness. Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words "division", "hatred" and "war" be banished from the heart of every man and woman.

Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be "brother", "sister", and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam! Amen.

MESSAGE TO THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NORMANDY LANDINGS*

From the Vatican, 7 June 2024

[...] Let us pray for the men who want wars, those who start them, stir them up senselessly, maintain and prolong them uselessly, or cynically profit from them. May God enlighten their hearts, may he set before their eyes the trail of misfortune they cause!

Let us pray for peacemakers. To want peace is not cowardly. On the contrary, it requires great courage, the courage to know how to give up something. Even if mankind's judgement is sometimes harsh and unjust towards them, "the peacemakers ... shall be called sons of God" (*Mt 5:9*). May they oppose the implacable and obstinate logic of confrontation and be able to open up peaceful paths of encounter and dialogue. May they persevere tirelessly in their endeavours, and may their efforts be crowned with success.

Lastly, let us pray for the victims of wars, both past and present. May God welcome to him all those who died in those terrible conflicts, and may he come to the aid of all those who suffer them today; the poor and the weak, the elderly, women and children are always the first victims of these tragedies. [...]

TO THE AMBASSADORS OF ETHIOPIA, ZAMBIA, TANZANIA, BURUNDI, QATAR AND MAURITANIA**

Clementine Hall, 8 June 2024

[...] the fabric of the family of nations is today torn by the tragedy of civil, regional and international strife. We have only to think of what is taking place in Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza and Haiti, to name but a few examples. At the same time, we are witnessing multiple humanitarian crises that result from such conflicts, including a lack of access to adequate shelter, food, water and medical supplies. Then, too, we must be attentive to the problems of forced migration and the increasing number of internally displaced persons, the scourge of human trafficking, the effects of climate change, especially upon the poorest and most vulnerable, and

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240605-messaggio-sbarco-normandia.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240608-ambasciatori.html>

global economic imbalances that contribute to a loss of hope, especially among young people. As well, the decline in the birthrate, experienced by many countries, is a cause for grave concern. In view of such challenges, it is essential to undertake a far-sighted, constructive and creative dialogue, based on honesty and openness, in order to find shared solutions and strengthen the bonds that unite us as brothers and sisters within the global family. In this regard, we must also bear in mind our obligations to future generations, asking ourselves what kind of world we want to leave to our children and those who will come after them.

The answer to that question involves the second word, *hope*. Hope is the central message of the forthcoming Jubilee Year that the Catholic Church will celebrate beginning on 24 December next (cf. *Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025*, 9 May 2024). In the face of uncertainty about the future, it is easy to become discouraged, pessimistic and even cynical. Yet hope leads us to recognize the goodness present in our world and provides the strength needed to meet the challenges of our day. For this reason, I like to think of you, dear Ambassadors, as signs of hope, because you are women and men who seek to build bridges between peoples, not walls. The lofty responsibilities you exercise are a reminder that common ground, mutual understanding and concrete expressions of social friendship are all possible. In this regard, I trust that your mission will contribute not only to the consolidation of the good relations existing between your nations and the Holy See, but also to the building of a more just and more humane society in which all are welcomed and given the necessary opportunities to advance together along the path of fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

Indeed, *peace* – the third word I would offer you – is “the fruit of relationships that recognize and welcome others in their inalienable dignity” (*Message for the 57th World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2024). Only when we set aside indifference and fear can a genuine climate of mutual respect that leads to lasting concord grow and flourish. Your presence here is an eloquent sign of the resolution of the nations you represent and of the international community as a whole to address the situations of injustice, discrimination, poverty and inequality that afflict our world and hamper the peaceful aspirations of present and future generations. It is my hope that in exercising your role as diplomats you will always strive to be peacemakers, those who are blessed by the Almighty (cf. *Mt 5:9*).

**MESSAGE TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE XXV INTERNATIONAL “COLUMBAN’S
DAY 2024”**

(Piacenza, 22-23 June 2024)*

From the Vatican, 11 June 2024

The twenty-fifth International Meeting of Columban Associations [...] is indeed a cause for rejoicing, since for the past twenty-five years you have been meeting in the name of the great Irish abbot and have succeeded in creating a network of spiritual and cultural friendships in that part of Europe where Saint Columban and his companions left the imprint of their beneficent presence. Yours is certainly no merely historical, much less folkloric, commemoration. Rather, it aims to advance knowledge of Saint Columban and his legacy as a source of enrichment for both the Church and civil society in our own time.

At first glance, this aim might appear unrealistic, given the vast difference between the Europe of today and that of the sixth and seventh centuries, and between our way of life and the model proposed by the holy abbot and his companions. Yet, it is precisely this contrast, this difference, which makes the witness of Saint Columban’s message especially provocative and indeed attractive to us, immersed as we are in practical materialism and a type of neo-paganism. The Irish monks of those days became pilgrims and missionaries precisely in order to re-evangelize large areas of a continent where the first fruits of Christianity were at risk of being lost. Together with the work of reclaiming and cultivating those territories, they also made outstanding contributions to the fields of spirituality, learning and ethics. In this way, like the Benedictines elsewhere, the life and labours of the Columban monks proved decisive for the preservation and renewal of European culture.

In our own time, then, we need to draw nourishment from the vital “lymph” of the Gospel, lest the continent’s ecclesial and civil communities lose their identity and sink into a bland globalization, constantly at the mercy of the prevailing powers, but instead discover ways to express their faith and culture with creative fidelity to their rich traditions. In this way, they will be able to contribute to building up a Europe made up of peoples who live harmoniously, side by side, preserving their distinctiveness, yet open to encounter and dialogue with other cultures in our world. [...].

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240611-messaggio-columbans-day.html>

TO THE G7 SESSION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE*

Friday, 14 June 2024

[...] political action is urgently needed. The Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* reminds us that “for many people today, politics is a distasteful word, often due to the mistakes, corruption and inefficiency of some politicians. There are also attempts to discredit politics, to replace it with economics or to twist it to one ideology or another. Yet can our world function without politics? Can there be an effective process of growth towards universal fraternity and social peace without a sound political life?”. (*Fratelli Tutti*, 176)

Our answer to these questions is: No! Politics is necessary! I want to reiterate in this moment that “in the face of many petty forms of politics focused on immediate interests [...] ‘true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building’ (Laudato Si’, 178), much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future”. (*Fratelli Tutti* 178)

TO DELEGATES OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION**

Thursday, 20 June 2024

Jesus Christ is the heart of ecumenism. He is divine mercy incarnate, and our ecumenical mission is to bear witness to him. In the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Lutherans and Catholics formulated the common goal of “confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (cf. *1 Tim 2:5f*) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts” (No. 18).

Dear brothers and sisters, twenty-five years have passed since the signing of the *Official Common Statement* confirming that *Declaration*. That event, which took place on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, represented yet another sign of hope in our history of reconciliation. Let us cherish its memory as something ever alive.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240614-g7-intelligenza-artificiale.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240620-federazione-luterana.html>

May this twenty-fifth anniversary be observed in our communities as a celebration of hope. Let us remember that our shared spiritual roots are found in the “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” (*Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*) and thus move forward with confidence as “pilgrims of hope”. May the God of hope be with us and continue to accompany our dialogue of truth and charity with his blessing.

On this journey of ecumenism, I am reminded of a beautiful comment made by Bishop Zizioulas. This Orthodox Bishop, a pioneer of ecumenism, used to say that he knew the date of when Christians would unite: the day of the final judgment! But in the meantime, he said that we must walk together, pray together and do charitable work together, as we head toward that “hyper-ecumenical” day of the final judgment. He really said that; Zizioulas had a good sense of humor!

**TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE “CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE” FOUNDATION***

Clementine Hall, 22 June 2024

In my speech at the G7, I highlighted the critical aspects of Artificial Intelligence, emphasizing that it is, and must remain, a tool in human hands. Like other innovative tools through the ages, it demonstrates humanity’s ability to transcend itself, its drive to ever greater achievements, and thus its potential for bringing about great transformations, both positive and negative. In the latter sense, AI could well reinforce the technocratic paradigm and the culture of waste, aggravate disparities between advanced and developing nations, and delegate to a machine essential decisions with regard to human life. For this reason, I posited the absolute need for an ethical development and use of AI, and invited policymakers to adopt concrete actions to direct ongoing technological development towards universal fraternity and peace.

Your Conference, then, is helping to enhance our ability to appreciate the positive aspects of AI and to understand, mitigate, and contain its risks, working in dialogue with the scientific community to identify together the limits to be placed on innovation lest AI develop to the detriment of humanity.

Stephen Hawking, the well-known cosmologist, physicist and mathematician, observed that: “The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race. It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240622-centesimus-annus-propontifice.html>

increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete and would be superseded" (*BBC Interview*, 2 December 2014). Is this what we want?

The fundamental question you are asking is this: *what is AI meant to do?* Is it meant to meet the needs of humanity, and to enhance the well-being and integral development of individuals, or is it meant to enrich and increase the power already concentrated in the hands of a few technological giants, despite its threats to humanity? Again, this is the fundamental question.

The answer to this question depends on any number of factors, and a variety of aspects that call for deeper investigation. I would like to mention a few of these, as a stimulus for your continuing research.

- There is a need to explore the delicate and strategic issue of responsibility for the decisions made with the use of AI; this would require the contribution of various branches of philosophy and law, as well as other, more specific disciplines.

- Appropriate incentives and means of effective regulation must be identified, in order on the one hand to stimulate ethical innovation useful for the progress of humanity, and on the other to prohibit or limit undesirable effects.

- The whole sector of education, training, and communication needs to initiate a coordinated process to expand knowledge and awareness about the correct use of AI and to teach future generations, from childhood on, how to evaluate these tools.

- The impact of AI on the job market should also be carefully assessed. I encourage the members of the *Centesimus Annus Foundation*, and all those taking part in its initiatives, to work actively, within their respective fields, to promote processes of professional retraining and to formulate measures that can facilitate the relocation of individuals displaced by AI to other roles.

- The positive and negative effects of AI in the areas of security and privacy likewise call for careful study.

- We need to take into consideration and research more fully the impact of AI on people's relational and cognitive abilities and behaviours. We must not allow these capacities to be diminished or conditioned by a technological instrument controlled by those who own it or operate it.

- Lastly, recognizing that this list is far from exhaustive, we should consider the enormous consumption of energy required to develop AI, especially as humanity presently faces a challenging energy transition.

TO A DELEGATION FROM THE BOLOGNA MOSQUE*

Study of the Paul VI Hall, 26 June 2024

Jesus taught us to welcome each other as brothers. And this applies first of all to us, Christians, Jews and Muslims, who worship the One God and who refer, albeit in different ways, to Abraham as the father of the faith. In today's world, our witness of fraternity is indispensable and very precious.

And we, who have received the gift of this religious affiliation, are called upon to be open and welcoming towards those who do not share it, because they, like all of us, are members of the single human family.

In particular, sincere and respectful dialogue between Christians and Muslims is a duty for us who wish to obey God's will. Indeed, a Father's will is for his children to love each other, to help each other, and should some difficulty or misunderstanding arise between them, to come to an agreement with humility and patience.

This dialogue requires the effective recognition of the dignity and rights of every person. At the forefront of these rights is freedom of conscience and religion, which means that every human being should be fully free with regard to his or her religious choices. Furthermore, every believer must feel free to propose – never to impose! – his or her own religion to other people, believers or otherwise. This excludes any form of proselytism, understood as exerting pressure or threats; he must reject every type of financial or work favours; he must not take advantage of people's ignorance. In addition to this, marriage between people of different religions must not be an occasion to convert the spouse to one's own religion.

Dear friends, I hope that, wherever you live, you may maintain good relations with the Catholic Church: with the bishop, the clergy and the faithful, in mutual respect and friendship.

The world, especially at this historical moment, needs coherent believers, strongly engaged in building and keeping social and world peace. I thank you for also being, together with your communities, among these “artisans” of peace.

I assure you of my prayers and I ask you, please, to remember me in yours.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240626-delegazione-bologna.html>

**TO THE MEETING OF AID AGENCIES FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES
(R.O.A.C.O.)***

Clementine Hall, 27 June 2024

[...]in recent days you have focused on the dramatic situation in the Holy Land. There everything began, there the Apostles received the mandate to go out to the whole world and preach the Gospel. The faithful throughout the world are presently called to demonstrate their closeness and to encourage Christians, there and throughout the Middle East, to rise above the temptation to abandon their lands, torn by conflicts. It makes me think of an awful situation: that these lands are being stripped of Christians. The sufferings caused by war are all the more jarring and absurd when they occur in the very places where the Gospel of peace was proclaimed! To those who fuel the spiral of conflicts and reap profit from them, I once more say: Stop! Stop, because violence will never bring peace. There is urgent need for a ceasefire, for meetings and dialogue to permit the coexistence of different peoples. This is the only possible path to a stable future. With war, a senseless and inconclusive venture, no one emerges a winner: everyone ends up defeated because war, from the very beginning, is always already a defeat. Let us listen to those who suffer its consequences, the victims and those who have lost everything. Let us hear the cry of the young, of ordinary individuals and peoples, who are weary of the rhetoric of war and the empty slogans that constantly put the blame on others, dividing the world into good and evil, weary of leaders who find it difficult to sit at a table, negotiate and find solutions.

My thoughts also turn to the terribly tragic plight of war-torn Ukraine. I pray daily, and keep inviting others to pray, that paths of peace may open for that beloved people, that prisoners of war may be freed and children repatriated. Promoting peace and freeing prisoners are distinctive signs of Christian faith (cf. *Mt* 5:9; *Lk* 4:18); they cannot be reduced to mere displays of power. In these days, you have also focused on the humanitarian issue of displaced persons in the Karabakh region. I thank you for everything that you have done and continue to do in assisting those who suffer. I would also like to say thank you to Bishop Gevork Saroyan of the Armenian Apostolic Church for his presence during these days. As you return, I would ask you to convey my fraternal greetings to His Holiness Karekin II and to the dear people of Armenia. I had the opportunity to meet the first and the second Karekin in Buenos Aires.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240627-roaco.html>

Today, many Eastern Christians, perhaps more than ever before, are fleeing conflicts or migrating in search of work and better living conditions. Many, therefore, are living in the diaspora. I know that you have reflected on the pastoral care of those residing outside their traditional territory. This is a timely and significant problem. Some Churches, due to the massive migrations of recent decades, now have most of their faithful living outside their traditional territory, in places where pastoral care is often lacking due to the scarcity of priests, structures, and adequate training. As a result, those who have already had to leave their native lands behind, now also risk losing their religious identity and, with the passing of generations, the spiritual heritage of the East, an invaluable treasure for the Catholic Church, is weakened. I am grateful to the Latin dioceses that welcome Eastern Christians and that respect their traditions. I urge them to show particular concern, so that these, our brothers and sisters, may keep their rites alive and flourishing. I encourage the Dicastery to work to this end, also by establishing principles and norms that can help Latin bishops to aid the Eastern Catholics living in the diaspora. Thank you for all that you can do.

**TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION
OF THE SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL***

Friday, 28 June 2024

Certain that I am also echoing the sentiments of my beloved Brother, I would reaffirm what we stated together on that occasion, namely, that dialogue between our Churches poses no risk to the integrity of the faith; rather, it is a necessity arising from our fidelity to the Lord and leading us to the whole truth (cf. *Jn 16:13*) through an exchange of gifts and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Common Declaration of Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, Jerusalem, 25 May 2014). For this reason, I wish to encourage the work of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which has embarked on the study of delicate historical and theological issues. It is my hope that the pastors and theologians engaged in this process will go beyond purely academic disputes and listen with docility to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the life of the Church. And, at the same time, that what has already been studied and agreed upon will find

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/june/documents/20240628-patriarcato-costantinopoli.html>

full reception in our communities and places of formation. There will always and everywhere be resistance to this, but we must move forward with courage.

“MOTU PROPRIO” “FRATELLO SOLE”*

L'Osservatore Romano, 28 June 2024, p. 7.

[...] On 6 July 2022, the Permanent Observer to the UN deposited before the UN Secretary-General the Instrument by which the Holy See, in the name and on behalf of Vatican City State, accedes to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With this Instrument, I intended to contribute to the efforts of all States to offer, in accordance with their respective responsibilities and capacities, an adequate response to the challenges posed by climate change to humanity and to our common home.

There is a need to make a transition to a sustainable development model that reduces greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, setting the goal of climate neutrality. Mankind has the technological means to deal with this environmental transformation and its pernicious ethical, social, economic and political consequences, and, among these, solar energy plays a key role.

Therefore, I entrust to you, dear Confrères, in your respective capacities as President of the Governorate of Vatican City State and President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, the task of constructing an agrivoltaic plant located within the extraterritorial zone of Santa Maria di Galeria that will guarantee, not only the power supply of the radio station there, but also the complete energy sustenance of Vatican City State.

TO THE 50th SOCIAL WEEK OF ITALIAN CATHOLICS**

“Generali” Convention Center in Trieste, 7 July 2024

The very word “democracy” does not simply coincide with the vote of the people. Meanwhile, I am concerned about the decline in the number of people

* https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20240621-fratello-sole.html

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/july/documents/20240707-trieste.html>

voting. What does this mean? It is not just the people's vote, but rather it requires creating the conditions that allow everyone to express themselves and participate. Participation cannot be improvised: it is learned from childhood, and young people must be "trained" even to develop a critical sense regarding ideological and populist temptations. In this perspective, as I recalled years ago while visiting the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, it is important to highlight "the contribution which Christianity can offer to the cultural and social development of Europe today within the context of a correct relationship between religion and society", by promoting fruitful dialogue with the civil community and political institutions so that, illuminating each other and freeing ourselves from the dross of ideology, we can start a common reflection especially on issues related to human life and the dignity of the person.

Ideologies are seductive. Some compare them to the pied piper of Hamelin; they seduce, but they lead you to drown yourself.

For this purpose, the principles of *solidarity* and *subsidiarity* remain fruitful. Indeed, a people holds together through the bonds that constitute it, and these bonds are strengthened when each person is valued. Each person has value; each person is important. Democracy always requires the transition from *partisanship* to *participation*, from "cheering" to dialogue. "Only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity'. A truly human and fraternal society will be capable of ensuring in an efficient and stable way that each of its members is accompanied at every stage of life. Not only by providing for their basic needs, but by enabling them to give the best of themselves, even though their performance may be less than optimum, their pace slow or their efficiency limited". [6] Everyone should feel part of a community project; no one should feel useless. Certain forms of welfare that do not recognize people's dignity ... I will pause at the word welfare. Welfarism, just on its own, is the enemy of democracy, the enemy of love for neighbour. And some forms of welfarism that do not recognize the dignity of people are social hypocrisy. Let's not forget this. And what is behind this 'keeping a distance from social reality'? Indifference, and indifference is a cancer of democracy, a non-participation.

MESSAGE TO THE “AI ETHICS FOR PEACE” GATHERING
(Hiroshima, 9-10 July 2024)

From the Vatican, 10 July 2024

[...] In commending your initiative, I ask you to show the world that we are united in asking for a proactive commitment to protect human dignity in this new era of machines.

The fact that you are gathering in Hiroshima to discuss artificial intelligence and peace is of great symbolic importance. Among the current conflicts impacting our world – including the hatred of war – we hear more and more about this technology. That is why I consider this event in Hiroshima to be of extraordinary importance. It is crucial that, united as brothers and sisters, we remind the world that “in light of the tragedy that is armed conflict, it is urgent to reconsider the development and use of devices like the so-called ‘lethal autonomous weapons’ and ultimately ban their use. This starts from an effective and concrete commitment to introduce ever greater and proper human control. No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being” (*Address to the G7*, 14 June 2024).

As we look at the complexity of the issues before us, recognizing the contribution of the cultural riches of peoples and religions in the regulation of artificial intelligence is key to the success of your commitment to the wise management of technological innovation.

Hoping that your gathering will bear fruit in bringing about fraternity and cooperation, I pray that each of us may become instruments of peace for the world.

MESSAGE FOR THE OLIMPIC GAMES*
(26 July - 11 August 2024)

From Saint John Lateran, 27 June 2024

I join you in welcoming this prestigious international sporting event. Sport is a universal language that transcends borders, languages, races, nationalities and religions; it has the capacity to unite people, to encourage dialogue and mutual acceptance; it stimulates the surpassing of oneself, forms in the spirit of sacrifice, fos-

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240627-messaggio-giochi-olimpici.html>

ters loyalty in interpersonal relations; it invites people to recognize their own limits and the value of others. The Olympic Games, if they remain truly “games”, can therefore be an exceptional meeting place between peoples, even the most hostile. The five interlinked rings represent the spirit of fraternity that should characterize the Olympic event and sporting competition in general.

I therefore hope that the Paris Olympics will be an unmissable opportunity for all those who come from around the world to discover and appreciate each other, to break down prejudices, to foster esteem where there is contempt and mistrust, and friendship where there is hatred.

TO THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION IN ITALY*

Wednesday, 7 August 2024

In recent decades, Afghanistan has had a complicated and dramatic history, marked by a succession of wars and blood-stained conflicts, which have made it very difficult for people to lead peaceful, free and secure lives. Instability, warfare with all its destruction and death, internal divisions and the barriers to respecting certain fundamental rights have pushed many to take the path of exile. I have met with a number of families from Afghanistan who have come here to Rome.

Another important characteristic of Afghan, and indeed of Pakistani society must also be remembered, namely that they are made up of many peoples, each proud of their culture, traditions and unique way of life. This clear diversity, instead of being an opportunity for promoting a basic common denominator for protecting the characteristics and rights of each group, is sometimes used as a reason for discrimination and exclusion, if not outright persecution. This seems to be a tragedy; indeed you have lived through a tragic period with so many wars.

All of this takes on an even greater significance in the border area with Pakistan, where the intertwining of ethnic groups and the extremely “porous” borders lead to a complex situation where it is very difficult to ensure effectively the concrete adoption and application of legislation for all. In such contexts, processes can end up being triggered in which those parties that are or feel themselves to be stronger tend to go beyond the actual dictates of the law and take advantage of minorities, shielding themselves with an alleged right of force rather than relying on the force of law.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/august/documents/20240807-comunita-afgana.html>

The religious factor, by its very nature, should help soften the harshness of contrasts and create space for everyone to be granted full citizenship rights on an equal footing and without discrimination. Yet oftentimes religion is manipulated and instrumentalized, and ends up being used for contrary ends. In such cases, religion becomes a factor of confrontation and hatred, which can lead to violent acts. And you have often seen this yourselves. I too have seen these difficult moments reported by the news; so much difficulty and pain!

It is imperative, then, that everyone accept the principle that one cannot invoke God's name to foment contempt, hatred and violence towards others. Thus, I encourage you to continue in your noble endeavour to promote religious harmony and to strive to overcome misunderstandings between different religions in order to build paths of trusting dialogue and peace. This is no easy journey, which sometimes suffers setbacks; but, if you truly wish to do good for the community and foster peace, it is the only possible path and needs to be pursued with courage and perseverance. I remember when I was in the Central African Republic, visiting the Catholic community. I also went to visit the Islamic community, and prayed in their mosque. This included a meeting with the leaders, and the mosque was just in front of us, so I asked, "May I go and pray there?" They were not expecting it. They replied, "yes", so I took off my shoes and went to pray there. Then the head of the community joined me in the Popemobile and we went to visit all the communities, Islamic, Protestant and Catholic. This is what brings unity, it unites us so much.

In this regard, I would like to recall what the Grand Iman of Al-Azhar and I stated in the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019, namely that "religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who... have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women in order to make them act in a way that has nothing to do with the truth of religion". We therefore asked everyone to "stop using religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism and oppression". Moreover, we did so precisely because of our faith in God, who created men and woman to live as brothers and sisters and "does not want His name to be used to terrorize people".

What has been said about the role of religion can also be applied analogously to ethnic-linguistic-cultural differences, for in order to manage them well, it is equally necessary to adopt a "culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard" (ibid.).

Dear brothers, it is my fervent hope that these standards will become a com-

mon heritage and so influence people's thinking and behaviour, so that the principles are not only appreciated and shared in an abstract way, but concretely and effectively applied. If this happens, the discrimination against the Pashtun ethnic group in Pakistan, which your Association has not failed to point out, will also come to an end. Likewise, a new era can begin, in which the power of law, compassion – this word, “compassion”, is key! – and cooperation in mutual respect will give rise to a more just and humane civilization. I have seen in some countries in Africa, for example, where there are two important religions – Islam and Catholicism – how, at Christmas time, Muslims go to greet Christians and bring lambs and other gifts. Then, for the Feast of the Sacrifice, Christians bring Muslims things for the feast. This is genuine fraternity, and it is beautiful. Strive for this.

May the almighty and merciful God assist government leaders and peoples in building a society where all are accorded full citizenship with equal rights; where everyone can live according to their own customs and culture, within a framework that takes into account the rights of all, without abuses of power or discrimination.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC LEGISLATORS NETWORK (ICLN)*

Clementine Hall, 24 August 2024

The theme of this year's meeting, “*The World at War: Permanent Crises and Conflicts – What Does It Mean for Us?*”, is most timely. The present situation of “a third world war fought piecemeal” seems “permanent” and unstoppable – indeed, there is now a third world war. This ongoing crisis seriously jeopardizes the patient efforts made by the international community, above all through multilateral diplomacy, to encourage cooperation in addressing the grave injustices and the pressing social, economic and environmental challenges facing our human family. This is the case; I am not exaggerating.

What, then, is the response that is demanded, not only of legislators but of all men and women of good will, particularly those inspired by the Gospel vision of the unity of our human family and its vocation to build a world – to cultivate a garden (cf. *Gen 2:15; Is 61:11*) – marked by fraternity, justice and peace? This is the question. Allow me to propose a few points for your reflection.

First, the imperative of renouncing war as a suitable means of resolving conflicts and establishing justice. Let us not forget that “every war leaves our world

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/august/documents/20240824-legislatori.html>

worse than it was before”. This is certain, for we experience it. “War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 261). Capitulation does not mean one country’s surrender to another; war itself is a capitulation. It is truly a defeat. Moreover, the enormous destructive capacity of contemporary weaponry has effectively rendered the traditional boundaries of warfare obsolete. In many instances, the distinction between military and civilian targets is increasingly erased. Our consciences cannot fail to be moved by the scenes of death and destruction daily before our eyes. We need to hear the cry of the poor, the “widows and orphans” of which the Bible speaks, in order to see the abyss of evil at the heart of war and to resolve by every means possible to choose peace.

Second is the need for perseverance and patience, the proverbial “virtue of the valiant”, in pursuing the path of peace, in season and out of season, through negotiation, mediation and arbitration. “Dialogue must be the soul of the international community” (*Address to Members of the Diplomatic Community*, 8 January 2024), facilitated by renewed trust in the structures of international cooperation. Despite their proven effectiveness over the years in promoting global efforts for peace and respect for international law, these structures are in constant need of reform and renewal in order to adapt to the new current circumstances. In this regard, particular attention needs to be paid to upholding international humanitarian law and providing it with ever more solid juridical foundations. This naturally entails working for an ever more just distribution of the earth’s goods, ensuring the integral development of individuals and peoples, and in this way overcoming the scandalous inequalities and injustices that fuel long-term conflicts and generate further injustices and acts of violence worldwide.

Furthermore, in your daily experience as Catholic legislators and political leaders, you know what it is to deal with conflict on a smaller, but perhaps no less intense, scale within the communities that you represent and serve. As Christians, we recognize that the roots of conflict, fragmentation and breakdown within society are ultimately to be found, as the Second Vatican Council pointed out, in a deeper conflict present in the human heart (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10). Conflicts may sometimes be unavoidable, yet they can only be resolved fruitfully in a spirit of dialogue and sensitivity to others and their reasons, and in shared commitment to justice in the pursuit of the common good. Do not forget that that we cannot emerge from conflict by ourselves. We can only emerge together with others. No one can emerge from conflict by themselves.

Finally, dear friends, in offering you my prayerful good wishes for your deliberations, allow me to suggest that, perhaps more than anything else, our war-weary world, which seems unable to live without war, needs to revive the spirit of hope that led to the establishment of the structures of cooperation in the service of peace

in the wake of the Second World War. I would to ask you, whose service to our brothers and sisters is inspired and sustained by the peace that the world cannot give (cf. *Jn. 14:27*), to be witnesses of hope, particularly to the rising generation. War is not hope; war does not give hope. May your commitment to the common good, buoyed by trust in Christ's promises, serve as an example for our young people. How important it is for them to see models of hope and idealism that counter the messages of pessimism and cynicism to which they are so often exposed! We cannot ignore these terribly cynical messages! In the end, "what it means for us" to be living in "a world at war", with "permanent crises and conflicts", is to find the wisdom and strength to see beyond the clouds, to read the authentic signs of the times and, with the hope born of faith, to inspire others, especially the young, to work for a better tomorrow.

MESSAGE TO THE CATHOLIC GUIDE AND SCOUT ASSOCIATION OF ITALY (AGESCI)*

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 1 August 2024

May the days of reflection foster in each one of you the awareness of how delicate your educational task is regarding children, teenagers and young people, who must be accompanied with wisdom and supported with affection. This requires a high quality of formation for those who are called to carry out this important mission: first and foremost, the willingness to listen and empathize with others, as the domain in which evangelization germinates and bears fruit.

In particular, this is a matter of developing the capacity to listen and the art of dialogue, which are naturally anchored in a life of prayer, where one enters into dialogue with the Lord, pausing in His presence to learn from Him the art of self-giving love, so that little by little, one's existence becomes in tune with the Master's heart.

[...] I reiterate my appreciation to your entire Association, which is an important educational reality in the Church, and I encourage you to make it increasingly a gymnasium for Christian life, an opportunity for fraternal communion, and a school for service to one's neighbour, especially those most disadvantaged and in need. Do not let yourselves be paralysed by difficulties, but always set out in search of the plan that God has for each one of us.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240801-messaggio-agesci.html>

**TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFERENCE OF LATIN BISHOPS
OF THE ARAB REGION (C.E.L.R.A.)***

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall, 28 August 2024

The Middle East is experiencing moments of very strong tension, which in some contexts lead to open clashes and outbursts of war. The conflict, instead of finding an equitable solution, seems to be becoming chronic, with the risk that it will spread to ignite the entire region. This situation has caused thousands and thousands of deaths, enormous destruction, immense suffering and the spread of feelings of hatred and resentment, which prepare the ground for new tragedies.

Today I have the opportunity to express directly my closeness to you and to the Churches you represent. May the Lord always give you the strength to bear witness to faith in Him, also through respectful and sincere dialogue with everyone.

May you keep hope alight! Be yourselves, for everyone, signs of hope, a presence that fosters words and gestures of peace, brotherhood, and respect. A presence that, in itself, invites reason, reconciliation, overcoming with good will the divisions and enmities stratified and hardened over time, which are becoming increasingly inextricable. Thank you for being the flame of hope where it seems to have been extinguished!

And I wish you well in your pastoral initiatives. In particular, may you identify the best and most effective way to ensure adequate Christian formation for students in public schools, in contexts where the Christian presence is a minority. This formation is of great importance, so that the content of faith may be known and accompanied by reflection, and so that faith, in confrontation with culture, may thus be strengthened and have the means to give reasons for Christian hope (cf. *1 Pet 3:15*).

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/august/documents/20240828-vescovi-celra.html>

**TO THE DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION –SECTION
FOR THE FIRST EVANGELIZATION AND NEW PARTICULAR CHURCHES***

Clementine Hall, 30 August 2024

Making an academic institution attractive and competitive requires dedicated instructors, scientific research and the means needed to make a significant contribution to scholarship. Making good use of resources entails eliminating duplication, sharing lecturers across the six institutions, eliminating unnecessary spending, planning activities wisely and abandoning outdated practices and programmes. For this, I want to thank the Cardinal and the Secretary who are working hard to avoid these ugly, dirty things that I just mentioned. Thank you for what you are doing.

In the particular case of the *Urbaniana*, it is important that its missionary and intercultural specificity be seen even more clearly in the quality of the formation that it offers, so that its graduates can be creative in mediating the Christian message vis-à-vis other cultures and religions. How greatly we need priests, consecrated persons and lay people filled with missionary zeal for evangelizing cultures and thus inculcating the Gospel! [...]. It is my hope that, as has already happened in places in Asia and in China, more research centres can be set up for the different geographical and cultural regions, while strengthening those already existing. Encouragement should also be given to affiliating the seminaries and schools of theology present in missionary territories. Where this is not possible, a different yet constant form of accompaniment ought to be ensured.

**MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE AMALFI COAST
TO MARK THE MEETING “INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE”****
(Cathedral of Saint Lawrence in Scala, Salerno, Italy, 3 September 2024)

From Casa Santa Marta, 30 August 2024

There are three sure ways to become instruments of peace:

1. Fill the day with gestures of peace. In this ancient town of Scala, you

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/august/documents/20240830-dicastero-evangelizzazione.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240830-messaggio-giovani-amalfitani.html>

can advance the path of solidarity and dialogue initiated by Blessed Fra' Gerardo Sasso, founder and first Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Malta. In an age of conflict, he created in Jerusalem, around 1100 A.D., the first interreligious hospital. You too, following his example, can build bridges of friendship and mutual solidarity. Illuminate every hour of your day by performing a gesture of peace: a gesture of service, of tenderness, of forgiveness.

2. Pray with your heart for peace. When we feel powerless before the drama of world scenarios, let us remember that “with God nothing will be impossible” (*Lk 1:37*). We have a very effective weapon, which is prayer. Let us use it! Let us pray more for peace, that it may come soon. Let us invoke it with faith and confidence! Let us take on the daily commitment to personal prayer for peace. Come together to share moments of Eucharistic adoration before the Lord, King of peace.

3. Live as pilgrims of hope. With courage, do not tire of dreaming of just peace and fraternity, because this is also the dream of the Father: that His children may be united and happy, recognizing each other as brothers and sisters. Look beyond the night! Do not give in to the thought that war can solve problems and lead to peace. War is always a defeat, a shameful surrender to the forces of evil. Let us remember all the victims, whom we must never forget, and may this remembrance truly open us up to finding a way forward in the present on a path of reconciliation.

TO THE 86th GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS MINOR*

Clementine Hall, 31 August 2024

I would like, then, to bring up with you three dimensions of your Franciscan spirituality, which I believe can aid in your discernment and your missionary apostolate: *fraternity, availability and commitment to peace.*

Fraternity. Your Chapter has as its motto: “The Lord gave me brothers” (*Test.*, 14) “to go out into the world” (*RB 3:10*). These words bring to mind the experience of Saint Francis, and they remind us that your mission, in accordance with his charism, is born in fraternity in order to promote fraternity (*RB 3, 10-12*; cf. *Letter to the Members of the Franciscan Family on the Eighth Centenary of the Approval of the Rule of Saint Francis*, 9 November 2023). At its heart, we might

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/august/documents/20240831-capitolo-cappuccini.html>

say, is a “mystique of collaboration”, thanks to which, in God’s plan, no one can consider himself an island, but each person is related to others, in order to grow in love, to step forward and to make his own uniqueness a gift to his brothers and sisters. One of you who cares for his own uniqueness, but without turning it into a gift to his brothers, has not yet begun to be a Capuchin!

You have not come together to “optimize” – as unfortunately we sometimes hear – the “human resources” of the Order, nor to improve its “performance” or to preserve its structures. Rather, you have come to acknowledge, in faith, that you are brothers, chosen, gathered and constantly accompanied by the providential love of the Father, and to let yourselves be challenged by this truth, especially in the field of formation, on which you have been working for some time. Without formation there is no future, let us always keep that in mind.

In your meetings, therefore, I encourage you to be on guard lest economic resources, human calculations or other such realities ever become the main priority. All these are useful tools that need to be taken into account, but always as means and never as ends. The priority must be people, those to whom the Lord sends you and those he has given you to live with, their good and their salvation. In a word, make fraternity your priority and promote it in your houses of formation, in the greater Franciscan family, in the Church and in all the areas in which you work, even if it means giving up projects and achievements of another kind in favor of fraternity. Fraternity comes first. You are friars. “But I am a priest!” Yes, but that comes after. The important thing is that you are friars. You are a priest, deacon, whatever you may be, but a friar: that is the basis.

This brings us to the second dimension on which we need to reflect: *availability*. Fraternity and availability. As Capuchins, you are known for being ready to go where no one else wants to, and that is a very good thing. Indeed, your “method” of openheartedness testifies to everyone that the most important thing in life is charity (cf. *1 Cor 13:13*), for which it is always worth dedicating our entire life.

In this way, you serve as a sign for the entire Community, which is called to be, always and everywhere, missionary and “outgoing” (cf. *Ad Gentes, 2; Evangelii Gaudium, 20*). It is an important sign, especially in times like ours, marked by conflicts and prejudice, where indifference and selfishness seem to prevail over openness, respect and sharing, with grave consequences such as the unjust exploitation of the poor and the devastation of the environment.

Your readiness to become personally involved with the needs of your brothers and sisters, and to say with humble courage: “Here I am, send me!” (*Is 6:8*), is a charismatic gift that needs to be cherished and cultivated. Try always to be simple, free and available, ready to leave everything behind (cf. *Mk 1:18*) and to

go wherever the Lord calls you, without seeking recognition or making demands, with open hearts and arms. And this will be your poverty.

We now come to the third dimension of your spirituality: your commitment to peace. Be peaceful. Your ability to draw near to all, so as to merit being called the “friars of the people”, has made you, over the centuries, expert “peacemakers” (cf. *Mt* 5:9), capable of creating opportunities for encounter, mediating the resolution of conflicts, bringing people together and promoting a culture of reconciliation, even in the most difficult situations.

At the basis of this charism, however, there is, as we have said, a fundamental condition: to be, in Christ, neighbours to all (cf. *Lk* 10:25-37), especially the poor, the outcast and the despairing, none excluded. Saint Francis, as we know, came to be universally known as the “man of peace”, beginning with his encounter with lepers, in whose embrace he discovered and accepted his own inner need for healing and in whose presence he came to recognize Christ as his Saviour. Thus forgiven, he became a bearer of forgiveness; thus loved, he became a source of love; thus reconciled, he was able to reconcile many others. He was forgiven, loved, and reconciled and he brings forgiveness, love, and reconciliation. You must be like this, men of love, of forgiveness, of reconciliation. Faith enabled him to be an instrument of peace in the hands of God, and faith, for him as for us, is always vitally linked to closeness to the poor and those in need. Let us never forget this (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 49).

MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY 2024*

(Yaoundé, Cameroon, 9 - 10 September 2024)

The theme chosen for this year’s event, *Promoting Multilingual Education: Literacy for Mutual Understanding and Peace*, is an invitation to reflect more deeply on the role of literacy in bringing peoples together and advancing mutual understanding. In this regard, the Holy See gladly renews its appreciation of the contribution made by UNESCO in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, and indeed multilingualism.

Multilingualism is increasingly being recognized as a factor favouring personal growth and development, particularly by expanding knowledge and fostering openness to other peoples and different cultures, but also by encouraging dialogue, listening and mediation. Polyglots are often in demand precisely because,

* Message signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, *Secretary of State* <<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240909-messaggio-alfabetizzazione.html>>

in addition to their ability to understand and speak several languages, they tend to have finer analytical abilities, better communication and social skills, and a greater aptitude for discernment. In this sense, they are better equipped to appreciate the richness of other cultures, including those far removed from their own.

Nelson Mandela once said, “If you speak to a man in a language he understands, you speak to his mind. If you speak to him in his own language, you speak to his heart”. Language is essential for communication between individuals and peoples. Helping people, and their future leaders, to become familiar with several languages translates into providing our human family with bridge-builders, capable of overcoming prejudices, differences, antagonisms and forms of polarization in order to give priority to dialogue and encounter. It means training people who know how to speak not only to the minds but also to the hearts of their interlocutors, whether allies or adversaries.

Once again this year, the Holy Father calls upon political decision-makers, educators and the general public to appreciate more deeply the vital role played by literacy in the building of a more educated, fraternal, supportive and peaceful society. Echoing the words of Saint John Paul II, he trusts that “people, freed from fear and the threat of potentially apocalyptic armed conflicts, will learn not to oppose one another but to intensify the bonds of fraternity uniting them, thanks to the means of communication offered by modern civilization”. (Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 20th International Literacy Day*, 1 September 1986.)

Upon you and your co-workers, and upon all the members of the networks involved in promoting literacy, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between peoples, His Holiness invokes God’s abundant blessings.

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO INDONESIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, TIMOR-LESTE AND SINGAPORE

(2-13 September 2024)

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS*

Istana Negara Presidential Palace Hall, Jakarta, Indonesia, 4 September 2024

[...]. just as the ocean is the natural element uniting all Indonesian islands, the mutual respect for the specific cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics of all the groups present in Indonesia is the indispensable and unifying fabric that makes Indonesians a united and proud people.

Your national motto *Bhinneka tunggal ika* (*United in Diversity*, literally *Many but One*) captures well this multifaceted reality of diverse peoples firmly united in one nation. It also shows that, just as the great biodiversity present in this archipelago is a source of richness and splendour, your specific differences similarly contribute to forming a magnificent mosaic, in which each tile is an irreplaceable element in creating a great original and precious work. This is your treasure, your greatest riches.

A harmony in diversity is achieved when particular perspectives take into account the needs common to all and when each ethnic group and religious denomination acts in a spirit of fraternity, pursuing the noble goal of serving the good of all. The awareness of participating in a shared history, in which solidarity is essential and contributions are made by all, helps to identify the right solutions, to avoid the exasperation of contrasts and to transform opposition into effective cooperation.

This wise and delicate balance, between the multiplicity of cultures and different ideological visions, and the ideals that cement unity, must be continuously defended against imbalances. It is a work of craftsmanship, I repeat, a work of craftsmanship entrusted to everyone, but in a special way to those in political life, who should strive toward harmony, equity, respect for the fundamental rights of human beings, sustainable development, solidarity and the pursuit of peace, both within society and with other peoples and nations. From this comes the greatness

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240904-indonesia-autorita.html>

of politics. A wise man once said that politics is the highest form of charity. This is beautiful.

In order to foster a peaceful and fruitful harmony that ensures peace and unites efforts to remove the imbalances and suffering that still persist in some areas, the Church desires to increase interreligious dialogue. In this way, prejudices can be eliminated and a climate of mutual respect and trust can grow. This is indispensable for meeting common challenges, including that of countering extremism and intolerance, which through the distortion of religion attempt to impose their views by using deception and violence. Closeness, on the other hand, listening to the opinion of others, creates a fraternal nation. This is something very, very beautiful.

[...] In other contexts, people believe they can or should disregard the need to seek God's blessing, judging it to be superfluous for human beings and civil society. They promote instead their own efforts, but this often leads them to encounter frustration and failure. Yet, there are times when faith in God is continually placed in the forefront, but is sadly manipulated to foment divisions and hatred instead of furthering peace, communion, dialogue, respect, cooperation and fraternity for building up the nation.

Brothers and sisters, in the face of the above challenges, it is encouraging that the philosophy guiding the organization of the Indonesian State is both balanced and wise. In this regard, I make my own the words of Saint John Paul II during his 1989 visit to this very palace. Among other things, he said: "In acknowledging the presence of legitimate diversity, in *respecting the human and political rights* of all citizens, and in encouraging the growth of national unity based on tolerance and respect for others, you lay the foundations for that just and peaceful society which all Indonesians wish for themselves and long to bequeath to their children" (*Address to the President of the Indonesian Republic and the Authorities*, Jakarta, 9 October 1989).

If at times in the past the principles mentioned above have not always been implemented, they remain valid and reliable, like a beacon that illuminates the path to be taken and that warns of the most dangerous mistakes to be avoided.

**BISHOPS, PRIESTS, DEACONS, CONSECRATED PERSONS, SEMINARIANS
AND CATECHISTS***

Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Jakarta, Indonesia, 4 September 2024

[...] the motto chosen for this Apostolic Visit is *Faith, Fraternity, Compassion*. I think these are three virtues that express well both your journey as a Church and your character as a people, who are ethnically and culturally diverse. At the same time, you are characterized by an innate striving for unity and peaceful coexistence, as witnessed by the traditional principles of the *Pancasila*. I would now like to reflect with you on these three words.

The first is *faith*. Indonesia is a large country, with many natural riches, in terms of plants and wildlife, energy sources, raw materials and so on. If viewed superficially, such great wealth could be a reason for pride or arrogance, but when considered with an open mind and heart, this wealth can instead be a reminder of God, of his presence in the cosmos and in our lives, as Sacred Scripture teaches us (cf. *Gen 1; Sir 42:15; 43:33*). Indeed, it is the Lord who gives all this. There is not an inch of the marvelous Indonesian territory, nor a moment in the lives of its millions of inhabitants that is not a gift from God, a sign of his gratuitous and everlasting love as Father. Looking at all we have been given with the humble eyes of children helps us to believe, to recognize ourselves as small and beloved (cf. *Ps 8*), and to cultivate feelings of gratitude and responsibility.

Agnes talked about this when inviting us to live our relationship with creation and with our brothers and sisters, especially the most needy, through a personal and communal lifestyle marked by respect, civility and humanity, together with sobriety and Franciscan charity.

After faith, the second word in the motto is *fraternity*. A twentieth-century poet used a very beautiful expression to describe this attitude. She wrote that being brothers and sisters means loving each other by recognizing each other “as different as two drops of water” (W. Szyborska, “Nulla due volte accade”, in *La gioia di scrivere. Tutte le poesie (1945-2009)*, Milano 2009, 45). How beautiful! That expression captures it perfectly. No two drops of water are alike, nor are two brothers or sisters, not even twins are completely identical. Living out fraternity, then, means welcoming each other, recognizing each other as equal in diversity.

This, too, is a value dear to the Indonesian Church and is made manifest through the openness with which you address the various internal and external

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240904-indonesia-religiosi.html>

realities encountered on a cultural, ethnic, social and religious level. In particular, your local Church values the contribution of all and generously offers assistance in every setting. This, brothers and sisters, is important, because proclaiming the Gospel does not mean imposing our faith, placing it in opposition to that of others, or proselytizing, it means giving and sharing the joy of encountering Christ (cf. *1 Pet 3:15-17*), always with great respect and fraternal affection for everyone. I invite you always to keep yourselves open and friendly to all – I like the expression “hand-in-hand” as Father Maxi said – prophets of communion, in a world where the tendency to divide, impose and provoke each other seems to be constantly increasing (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 67). On this point, I want to tell you something: do you know who is the most divisive person in the world? The great divider, who always divides, but it is Jesus who unites. It is the devil who divides, so be careful!

As Sister Rina reminded us, it is important to try to reach everyone. In this regard, it is hoped that not only the texts of the word of God but also the teachings of the Church will be translated into *Bahasa Indonesia* in order to make them accessible to as many people as possible. Nicholas also pointed out the need to reach everyone, describing the mission of the catechist with the image of a “bridge” that unites. This struck me, and made me think of a wonderful vision in the great Indonesian archipelago of thousands of “bridges of the heart” uniting all the islands, and even more so of millions of such “bridges” uniting all the people who live there! Another beautiful image of fraternity would be an immense tapestry of threads of love that cross the sea, overcome barriers and embrace all diversity, making everyone “one heart and soul” (cf. *Acts 4:32*). It is the language of the heart, don’t forget this!

We come now to the third word: *compassion*, which is very closely related to fraternity. Compassion means to suffer with the other, to share feelings: it is a beautiful word! We know that compassion does not consist in giving alms to needy brothers and sisters, looking down on them from our own security and success. On the contrary, compassion consists in drawing close to one another, removing everything that can prevent us from stooping down to touch those on the ground and thus giving them hope (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 70). This is essential: to touch poverty. When I hear confessions, I always ask adults, “Do you give alms?” and they generally say, “Yes” because they are good people. But the second question is, “Do you, when you give alms, touch the hand of the beggar? Do you look into his eyes? Or do you throw the coin at him from a distance so as not to touch him?” This is something we all have to learn: compassion means to suffer, to walk with those who are suffering in their feelings and to embrace them, to accompany them. Moreover, it means embracing their dreams and desires for freedom and justice, taking care of them, supporting them while also involving others, widening the “net” and the

boundaries to create a great expansive dynamism of charity (cf. *ibid.*, 203). This does not mean being a communist, rather it means charity, it means love.

There are people who are afraid of compassion because they consider it a weakness, they think suffering with the other is a weakness. Instead, they champion, as if it were a virtue, the shrewdness of those who serve their own interests by keeping their distance from everyone, by not letting themselves be “touched” by anything or anyone, thus thinking they are more lucid and free in achieving their goals.

I sadly remember a very rich person in Buenos Aires, who had a habit of taking, and taking, more and more money. He died and left a huge inheritance. People joked around saying, “Poor guy, they couldn’t close the coffin!” He wanted to take everything but he took nothing. It might make us laugh, but don’t forget that the devil comes in through the pockets, always! Holding onto riches as security is an incorrect way of looking at reality. What keeps the world going is not the calculations of self-interest, which generally end up destroying creation and dividing communities, but offering charity to others. This is what moves us forward: charity that gives of itself. Compassion does not cloud the true vision of life. On the contrary, it makes us see things better, in the light of love, and we see things more clearly with the eyes of the heart. I would like to repeat, please be careful, and don’t forget that the devil enters through the pockets!

The architecture of this Cathedral’s main entrance, with its Marian focus, sums up very well what we have said. At the centre of the pointed arch is a pillar on which there is a statue of the Virgin Mary. It thus shows us that the Mother of God is above all a model of *faith*, but she also symbolically supports the entire edifice of the Church through her humble “yes” to God’s plan (cf. *Lk 1:38*). Yet the pillar represents Christ and the humble woman standing on that pillar seemingly bears with him the weight of the whole building, as if to say in the end that human labour and ingenuity cannot support itself. Mary, then, appears as an image of *fraternity*, a gesture of welcome in the middle of the main entrance to all those who wish to enter. She is the mother who receives us. Finally, she is also an icon of *compassion*, watching over and protecting God’s people who, with their joys and sorrows, labours and hopes, gather in the Father’s house. She is the mother of compassion.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to conclude these reflections by repeating what Saint John Paul II said when addressing Bishops, clergy and consecrated persons during his Visit here several decades ago. Quoting the following verse from the Psalms, “*Laetentur insulae multae* – Let the many islands rejoice” (*Ps 96:1*), he invited those listening to put it into practice by “bearing witness to the joy of the Resurrection and in giving your life so that even the most distant islands may ‘rejoice’ at hearing the Gospel, of which you are authentic preachers, teachers and

witnesses” (*Meeting with the Bishops, Clergy and Religious of Indonesia*, Jakarta, 10 October 1989).

I too renew this exhortation, and I encourage you to continue your mission by being strong in *faith*, open to all in *fraternity* and close to one another in *compassion*. Strong, open and close, with the fortitude of faith. Openness to welcome everyone! I am so struck by that parable in the Gospel, when the wedding guests did not want to come, what did the Lord do? Did he become bitter? No, he sent his servants and told them to go to the crossroads of the streets and to bring everyone inside. With this very beautiful style in mind, go forth with brotherhood, with compassion and with unity. I think of the many islands here, so many islands, and the Lord says to the good people, to you, “everybody, everybody”. Indeed, the Lord says, “good and bad,” everyone! I, too, renew this exhortation and encourage you to continue your mission, strong in faith, open to all in fraternity and close to others in compassion. Faith, fraternity and compassion. I leave you these three words, and you can think about them later. Faith, fraternity and compassion.

TO THE INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING*

Istiqlal Mosque (Jakarta, Indonesia), 5 September 2024

1) Address of the Holy Father

I am happy to be here, in the largest Mosque in Asia, together with all of you. I greet the Grand Imam and thank him for his words, reminding us that this place of worship and prayer is also “a great house for humanity”, where everyone can enter and take time for themselves, in order to make space for that yearning for the infinite that each one of us carries in our hearts, and to seek an encounter with the divine and experience the joy of friendship with others.

Moreover, I would like to recall that this Mosque was designed by the architect Friedrich Silaban, a Christian who won the design competition. This testifies to the fact that throughout the history of this nation and in the very fabric of its culture, the Mosque, like other places of worship, are spaces of dialogue, mutual respect and harmonious coexistence between religions and different spiritual sensibilities. This is a great gift that you are called to cultivate every day, so that religious

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240905-indonesia-incontro-interreligioso.html>

experiences may be reference points for a fraternal and peaceful society and never reasons for close-mindedness or confrontation.

In this regard, mention should be made of the underground tunnel, the “tunnel of friendship”, connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption. This is an eloquent sign, allowing these two great places of worship not only to be “in front” of each other, but also “connected” to each other. Indeed, this passageway allows for encounter, dialogue and a real possibility for “finding and sharing a ‘mystique’ of living together, mingling and encounter [...] stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 87). I encourage you to continue along this path so that all of us, together, each cultivating his or her own spirituality and practicing his or her religion, may walk in search of God and contribute to building open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable.

Bearing in mind all that has been said, which is symbolized by the tunnel, I would like to leave you with two suggestions to encourage you on the path of unity and harmony that you have already embarked upon.

The first is *always look deeply*, because only in this way can we find what unites despite our differences. Indeed, on the surface there are spaces in both the Mosque and the Cathedral that are well defined and frequented by their respective faithful, but below ground in the tunnel, those same people can meet and encounter each other’s religious perspectives. This image reminds us of the important fact that the visible aspects of religions – the rites, practices and so on – are a heritage that must be protected and respected. However, we could say that what lies “underneath”, what runs underground, like the “tunnel of friendship”, is the one root common to all religious sensitivities: the quest for an encounter with the divine, the thirst for the infinite that the Almighty has placed in our hearts, the search for a greater joy and a life stronger than any type of death, which animates the journey of our lives and impels us to step out of ourselves to encounter God. Here, let us remember that by looking deeply, grasping what flows in the depths of our lives, the desire for fullness that dwells in the depths of our hearts, we discover that we are all brothers and sisters, all pilgrims, all on our way to God, beyond what differentiates us.

The second suggestion is *to preserve the bonds between you*. The tunnel was built in order to create a link between two different and distant places. This is what the tunnel does: it connects, creating a bond. Sometimes we think that a meeting between religions is a matter of seeking common ground between different religious doctrines and beliefs no matter the cost. Such an approach, however, may end up dividing us, because the doctrines and dogmas of each religious experience

are different. What really brings us closer is creating a connection in the midst of diversity, cultivating bonds of friendship, care and reciprocity. These relationships link us to others, allowing us to commit ourselves to seek the truth together, learning from the religious tradition of others, and coming together to meet our human and spiritual needs. They are also bonds that allow us to work together, to move forward together in pursuit of the same goals: defence of human dignity, the fight against poverty and the promotion of peace. Unity is born from personal bonds of friendship as well as mutual respect and defence of the ideas of others and their sacred spaces. May you always cherish this!

Dear brothers and sisters, “fostering religious harmony for the sake of humanity” is the path that we are called to follow. It is also the title to the joint declaration prepared for this occasion. By adhering to it, we take on the responsibility to address the serious and sometimes dramatic crises that threaten the future of humanity such as wars and conflicts, which are unfortunately caused at times by the manipulation of religion, and the environmental crisis, which is an obstacle to the growth and coexistence of peoples. In the face of these crises, it is important that the values common to all religious traditions be effectively promoted in order to help society “defeat the culture of violence and indifference” (*Joint Declaration of Istiqlal*) and promote reconciliation and peace.

I thank you for the common path you are taking. Indonesia is a great country, a mosaic of cultures, ethnicities and religious traditions, a rich diversity, which is also reflected in the varied ecosystem. If it is true that you are home to the world’s largest gold mine, know that the most precious treasure is the determination that differences can be harmonized through concord and mutual respect instead of being a cause for conflict. You are known for this harmony. Do not lose this gift! Do not impoverish yourselves of this great treasure. On the contrary, cultivate it and pass it on, especially to the young. May no one succumb to the allure of fundamentalism and violence. May everyone instead be awestruck by the dream of a free, fraternal and peaceful society and humanity!

Thank you for your kind smiles, which always shine on your faces and are a sign of your beauty and inner openness. May God preserve this gift. With his help and blessing go forth, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, united in diversity. Thank you!

2) Greeting in the Tunnel of Friendship

I congratulate you all because the purpose of this “Tunnel of Friendship” is to be a place of dialogue and encounter.

When we think of a tunnel, we might easily imagine a dark pathway. This could be frightening, especially if we are alone. Yet here it is different, for everything is illuminated. I would like to tell you, however, that you are the light that

illuminates it, and you do so by your friendship, by the harmony you cultivate, the support you give each other, and by journeying together, which leads you in the end towards the fullness of light.

We who belong to different religious traditions have a role to play in helping everyone pass through the tunnels of life with our eyes turned towards the light. Then, at the end of the journey, we will be able to recognize in those who have walked beside us, a brother, a sister, with whom we can share life and support each other.

In the face of today's many challenges, we respond with the sign of fraternity. Indeed, by welcoming others and respecting their identity, fraternity urges them on a common path travelled in friendship and leading towards the light.

I am grateful to those who work with the conviction that we can live in harmony and peace, and are aware of the need for a more fraternal world. I hope that our communities may increasingly be open to interreligious dialogue and be symbols of the peaceful coexistence that characterizes Indonesia.

I pray to God, the Creator of all, that he will bless everyone who will pass through this Tunnel in a spirit of friendship, harmony and fraternity. Thank you!

3) Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024

Fostering Religious Harmony for the Sake of Humanity, signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar during the interreligious Meeting in the Jakarta Istiqlal Mosque

As can be seen from the events of recent decades, our world is clearly facing two serious crises: dehumanization and climate change.

1. The global phenomenon of dehumanization is marked especially by widespread violence and conflict, frequently leading to an alarming number of victims. It is particularly worrying that religion is often instrumentalized in this regard, causing suffering to many, especially women, children and the elderly. The role of religion, however, should include promoting and safeguarding the dignity of every human life.

2. The human exploitation of creation, our common home, has contributed to climate change, leading to various destructive consequences such as natural disasters, global warming and unpredictable weather patterns. This ongoing environmental crisis has become an obstacle to the harmonious coexistence of peoples.

In response to these two crises, guided by our respective religious teachings and recognizing the contribution of Indonesia's philosophical principle of "Pancasila", we, together with the other religious leaders present, call for the following:

I. The values shared by our religious traditions should be effectively promoted in order to defeat the culture of violence and indifference afflicting our world. Indeed, religious values should be directed towards promoting a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity in order to overcome both dehumanization and environmental destruction.

II. Religious leaders in particular, inspired by their respective spiritual narratives and traditions, should cooperate in responding to the abovementioned crises, identifying their causes and taking appropriate action.

III. Since there is a single global human family, interreligious dialogue ought to be recognised as an effective instrument for resolving local, regional and international conflicts, especially those incited by the abuse of religion. Moreover, our religious beliefs and rituals have a particular capacity to speak to the human heart and thus foster a deeper respect for human dignity.

IV. Acknowledging that a healthy, peaceful and harmonious living environment is vital for becoming true servants of God and custodians of creation, we sincerely call on all people of good will to take decisive action in order to maintain the integrity of the natural environment and its resources, for we have inherited them from past generations and hope to pass them on to our children and grandchildren.

HOMILY*

Gelora Bung Karno Stadium (Jakarta, Indonesia), 5 September 2024

[...] faced with the many responsibilities of our daily lives, together with the call we all feel to build a more just society and move forward on the path of peace and dialogue – that path which has long been the case in Indonesia – we can sometimes feel inadequate. We sometimes feel the weight of our commitment and dedication that does not always bear fruit, or of our mistakes that seem to impede the journey we are on. We too are asked not to remain prisoners of our failures, which is very bad, because failures take hold of us and we can become prisoners of failure. No, please: let us not remain prisoners of our failures. Instead of keeping our eyes fixed only on our empty nets, then, we are to look to Jesus and trust him. Do not look at your empty nets, look at Jesus! He will make you walk, he will help you, trust in Jesus! Even when we have passed through the night of failure and

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2024/documents/20240905-indonesia-messa.html>

times of disappointment when we have caught nothing, we can always risk going out to sea and cast our nets again. Now let us take a moment of silence and each of you think about your own failures. And looking at these failures, let us risk, let us move forward with the courage of the word of God.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta, whose memory we celebrate today and who tirelessly cared for the poorest of the poor and became a promoter of peace and dialogue, used to say, “When we have nothing to give, let us give that nothing. And remember, *even if you reap nothing, never tire of sowing*”. Brother and sister, never tire of sowing, for this is life.

Brothers and sisters, I would also like to say to you, to this nation, to this wonderful and varied archipelago, do not grow weary of setting sail, do not grow weary of casting your nets, do not grow weary of dreaming, do not grow weary of building again a civilization of peace. Always dare to dream of fraternity, which is a real treasure among you. Guided by the word of the Lord, I encourage you to sow seeds of love, confidently tread the path of dialogue, continue to show your goodness and kindness with your characteristic smile. Have you been told that you are a smiling people? Please, do not lose your smile, and keep moving forward! And be builders of peace. Be builders of hope!

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA*

“APEC Haus”, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 7 September 2024

In your homeland, an archipelago with hundreds of islands, more than eight hundred languages are spoken, corresponding to just as many ethnic groups. This points to an extraordinary cultural and human richness. I must confess that this greatly fascinates me, also on a spiritual level, because I imagine that this enormous variety is a challenge to the Holy Spirit, who creates harmony amid differences!

Your country, besides consisting of islands and languages, is also rich in natural resources. These goods are destined by God for the entire community. Even if outside experts and large international companies must be involved in the harnessing of these resources, it is only right that the needs of local people are given due consideration when distributing the proceeds and employing workers, in order to improve their living conditions.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240907-papua-nuovaguinea-autorita.html>

These environmental and cultural treasures represent at the same time a great responsibility, because they require everyone, civil authorities and all citizens, to promote initiatives that develop natural and human resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. A manner that improves the wellbeing of all, excluding nobody, through concrete programmes, international cooperation, mutual respect and agreements beneficial to all parties.

A necessary condition for such lasting results is the stability of institutions, which is fostered by agreement on certain essential points amidst different concepts and sensibilities present in society. Indeed, increasing institutional stability and building consensus on fundamental choices is a prerequisite for integral and fair development. It also requires a long-term vision and a climate of cooperation among all, even if there is a distinction of roles and differences of opinion.

It is my particular hope that tribal violence will come to an end, for it causes many victims, prevents people from living in peace and hinders development. I appeal, therefore, to everyone's sense of responsibility to stop the spiral of violence and instead resolutely embark on the path that leads to fruitful cooperation for the benefit of all the people of the country.

Indeed, the aforementioned attitudes can create the conditions in which the question of the status of Bougainville Island can also find a definitive solution while avoiding the rekindling of ancient tensions.

By bolstering agreement on the foundational elements of civil society, together with the willingness of each person to sacrifice something from his or her point of view for the benefit of all, the necessary forces can be utilized to improve infrastructure, address the health and educational needs of the population and increase opportunities for dignified work.

Sometimes we forget that human beings need more than just the basic necessities of life. They also need great hope in their hearts. This allows them to live fully, giving them zest and courage to undertake wide-ranging projects, and enables them to lift their gaze upward toward vast horizons.

An abundance of material goods is not enough to give birth to a life-giving, serene, hard-working and joyful society, which without a broader spiritual outlook turns in on itself and leads to a dryness of heart. As a result, society loses its way and forgets the correct hierarchy of values. Moreover, this dryness takes away society's drive to move forward and, as happens in some opulent societies, blocks its progress to the extent that it loses hope in the future and can no longer find reasons to pass on life.

That is why it is necessary to direct the spirit toward greater realities. Our attitudes and actions must be sustained by an inner strength, which shelters them from the risk of being corrupted or of losing the ability to recognize the value of work and the need to carry it out with dedication and devotion.

Spiritual values greatly influence the building of the earthly city and all temporal realities. In other words, these values infuse a soul, and inspire and strengthen every project. This is also highlighted in the logo and theme of my Journey to Papua New Guinea. The motto sums this up in one word: Pray. Perhaps some who are overly concerned with “political correctness” are surprised by this choice. If so, they are mistaken, because a people that prays has a future, drawing strength and hope from above. Even the image of the bird of paradise on the logo of the Journey is a symbol of freedom: a freedom that no one and nothing can stifle because it is within us, and is guarded by God who is love and wants his children to be free.

For all those who profess to be Christians – the vast majority of your people – I fervently hope that faith will never be reduced just to the observance of rituals and precepts. May it be marked instead by love, love of Jesus Christ and following him as a disciple. In this way, faith can become a lived culture, inspiring minds and actions and becoming a beacon of light that illuminates the path forward. At the same time, faith can also help society as a whole to grow and find good and effective solutions to its greatest challenges.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I have come here to encourage the Catholic faithful to continue their journey and to confirm them in their profession of faith. I have come to rejoice with them in the progress they are making and to share their difficulties. I am here, as Saint Paul would say, as a “worker with you for your joy” (*2 Cor 1:24*).

I commend the Christian communities for the works of charity they are carrying out in the country. I also urge them always to seek cooperation with public institutions and with all people of good will, beginning with their brothers and sisters belonging to other Christian denominations and other religions, for the sake of the common good of all the citizens of Papua New Guinea.

The shining witness of Blessed Peter To Rot – as Saint John Paul II stated during the Mass for his Beatification – “shows you how to put yourselves generously at the service of others [...] and to ensure that society develops in honesty and justice, harmony and solidarity” (*Homily*, Port Moresby, 17 January 1995). May his example, together with that of Blessed John Mazzucconi, PIME, and all the missionaries who have proclaimed the Gospel in your land, give you strength and hope.

May Saint Michael the Archangel, heavenly patron of Papua New Guinea, always watch over you, defend you from all danger and protect the Authorities and all the people of this country.

I thank you for opening to me the doors of your beautiful country, so far from Rome and yet so close to the heart of the Catholic Church. For in the heart of the Church is the love of Jesus Christ, who on the cross embraced all men and women. His Gospel is for all peoples, for it is not tied to any earthly power, but is

free to nourish every culture and make the Kingdom of God grow in the world. The Gospel is inculturated and cultures need to be evangelized. May this Kingdom of God be fully welcomed in this land, so that all the peoples of Papua New Guinea, with the variety of traditions, may live together in harmony and offer the world an example of fraternity.

TO THE CHILDREN OF STREET MINISTRY AND CALLAN SERVICES*

*“Caritas Technical Secondary School”, Port Moresby,
7 September 2024*

One of you asked me: “Why am I not like other people?”. I really only have one answer to this question and that is: “None of us is like anyone else, because we are all unique in God’s eyes!”. It is not only that “there is hope for everyone” – as has been said – but I would add that each one of us has a role and mission in the world that no one else can fulfil. Even if it involves difficulties, carrying out our role and mission will also give us a great deal of joy in ways that are different for each person. Peace and joy are for everyone.

TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF VANIMO**

*Esplanade in front of Holy Cross Cathedral, Vanimo
8 September 2024*

[...] since the middle of the nineteenth century, the mission here has never ceased. Consecrated men and women, catechists and lay missionaries have not stopped preaching the word of God and offering help to their brothers and sisters through pastoral care, education, healthcare and many other ways. They have faced many difficulties in order to be an instrument “of peace and love” for all, as Sister Jaisha Joseph told us.

As a result, churches, schools, hospitals and missionary centres all around us testify that Christ came to bring salvation to all, so that each person may flourish

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240907-papua-nuovaguinea-bambini.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240908-papua-nuovaguinea-fedeli.html>

in all his or her beauty for the sake of the common good (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 182).

You are “experts” in beauty here, because you are surrounded by beauty! You live in a magnificent land, enriched by a great variety of plants and birds. One cannot help but be amazed by the colours, sounds and scents, as well as the grandiose spectacle of nature bursting forth with life, all evoking the image of Eden!

The Lord entrusts this richness to you as a sign and an instrument, so that you too may live united in harmony with him and with your brothers and sisters, respecting our common home and looking after one another (cf. *Message for the Fifth World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, 1 September 2019).

Looking around us, we see the “sweetness” of nature. Yet when we look to ourselves, we realize that there is an even more beautiful sight: that which grows in us when we love one another, as David and Maria witnessed to when speaking of their journey as a couple joined together by the Sacrament of Matrimony. Indeed, our mission is precisely to spread the beauty of the Gospel of Christ everywhere through loving God and our brothers and sisters (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120)!

In carrying out this mission, Steven told us how some of you face long journeys to reach the most distant communities, sometimes leaving your homes behind. You are doing something beautiful, and it is important that you are not left alone. The entire community needs to support this effort, so that you can carry out your service serenely, especially when having to reconcile the demands of the mission with family responsibilities.

However, there is also another way in which we can help, and that is for each of us to be missionaries where we live (cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad Gentes*, 23): at home, at school, in the workplace, so that everywhere – in the forests, villages and cities – the beauty of the landscape is matched by the beauty of a community where people love one another. Jesus taught us this when he said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn 13:35; cf. Mt 22:35-40*).

In this way, we will increasingly form a great orchestra – which Maria Joseph, our violinist, likes so much – able with its notes to “recompose” rivalries, to overcome divisions – personal, family and tribal –, to drive out fear, superstition and magic from people’s hearts, to put an end to destructive behaviours such as violence, infidelity, exploitation, alcohol and drug abuse, evils which imprison and take away the happiness of so many of our brothers and sisters, even in this country.

Let us remember that love is stronger than all this and its beauty can heal the world, because it has its roots in God (cf. *Catechesis*, 9 September 2020). Let us spread and defend it, even when doing so may lead to some misunderstandings and opposition. Blessed Peter To Rot, spouse, father, catechist and martyr of this

land gave witness to love by word and example. He gave his life precisely to defend the unity of the family in the face of those who wanted to undermine its foundations.

Dear friends, after visiting your country, many tourists return home saying they have seen “paradise”. They usually refer to the natural beauty they enjoyed. We know, however, that this is not the greatest treasure. There is a more beautiful and fascinating treasure that is found in your hearts and that manifests itself in the charity with which you love each other.

The most precious gift you can share with everyone is to make Papua New Guinea famous not only for its variety of plant and animal life, its enchanting beaches and clear sea, but famous above all for the good people you meet here. I say this especially to you, children, with your contagious smiles and your exuberant joy, which spreads out in every direction. You are the most beautiful image that visitors can take with them and keep in their hearts!

TO YOUNG PEOPLE*

“Sir John Guise” Stadium”, Port Moresby, 9 September 2024

Confronted with the variety of languages that divide and disperse, we need one language to help bring us together. But I ask you: what is the language that fosters friendship, that breaks down the walls of division and opens the way for us to enter into one brotherly embrace? What is this language? I would like to hear from some of you brave ones... Who can tell me what language this is? Who is the bravest, raise your hand and come forward here. [A boy replies: love]. Are you sure? [Young people answer: yes!] Think about it. And against love, what is there? Hate. But there is also something perhaps uglier than hate: indifference to others. Do you understand what hatred is and what indifference is? Do you understand? [Young people answer: yes!] You know that indifference is a very bad thing, because it means leaving others on the street and not caring about helping others. Indifference has its roots in selfishness.

You who are young must have the restlessness of heart to care for others. You must have the restlessness of making friends with each other. You must care for the one thing that I am going to say to you now, which perhaps may seem a little strange. There is a very important relationship in the life of a young person: the

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240909-papua-nuovaguinea-giovani.html>

closeness to the grandparents. Do you agree with that? [Young people respond: yes!] Now, all together we say, “Long live grandparents!” [Young people respond: Long live grandparents!] Thank you very much.

Let us return to the biblical account of Noah’s descendants. Each spoke a different language, even many dialects. I ask you: how many dialects are there here? One? Two? Three? But you, do you have a common language? Think carefully: do you have a common language? [Young people answer: yes!]. The language of the heart! The language of love! The language of closeness! And also, the language of service.

I thank you for your presence here. And I hope that all of you speak the deepest language: that all of you may be a “wantok” of love!

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN TIMOR-LESTE*

Presidential Palace Hall, Dili, Timor Leste, 9 September 2024

In this place Asia and Oceania touch each other. In a certain sense, they also encounter Europe, which, though geographically distant, seems closer due to the role it has had in this area over the past five centuries – I do not want to talk about the Dutch pirates! Indeed, the first Dominican missionaries arrived here from Portugal in the sixteenth century, bringing with them the Catholic faith and the Portuguese language. Today, both Portuguese and Tetum are the two official languages of the country.

Christianity, born in Asia, arrived at these far reaches of the continent through European missionaries, testifying to its universal vocation and ability to harmonize with even the most diverse cultures, which find a new coalescence that is both higher and profound when encountering the Gospel. Christianity enculturates, it takes on the cultures and therein the various Eastern rites of the various peoples, for one of the important aspects of Christianity is the inculturation of the faith. At the same time, it evangelizes cultures. This binomial, inculturation of faith and evangelization of culture, is important for Christian life. It is not an ideological faith, but a faith rooted in culture.

This land is adorned with mountains, forests and plains, surrounded by a marvellous sea, from what I could see, so rich in many things, many fruits and

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240909-timor-leste-autorita.html>

wood. Yet this land has gone through a painful period in the recent past. It has experienced upheaval and violence, which often occur when a people looks toward full independence only to have its quest for autonomy denied or thwarted.

From 28 November 1975 until 20 May 2002, that is, from the date independence was declared until it was definitively restored, Timor-Leste endured its greatest suffering and trial. It suffered. The country, however, has been able to rise again, finding a path to peace and the beginning of a new phase of development, of improved living conditions and of appreciation on all levels of the unspoiled splendour of this land and its natural and human resources.

We give thanks to God, since you never lost hope while going through such a dramatic period of your history, and after dark and difficult days, a dawn of peace and freedom has finally dawned.

Your rootedness in the faith has greatly helped in reaching these important goals. Saint John Paul II emphasized this during his Visit to your country. In his homily in Taçi-Tolu, he recalled that the Catholics of Timor-Leste have “a tradition in which family life, education and social customs are deeply rooted in the Gospel”, a tradition “imbued with the teachings and spirit of the Beatitudes,” a rich tradition of “humble trust in God, of mercy and forgiveness, and, when necessary, of patient suffering in time of trial” (12 October 1989). And translating this for today, I would say that you are a people that has suffered, but are wise through suffering.

In this regard, I wish in particular to recall and commend your assiduous efforts to achieve full reconciliation with your brothers and sisters in Indonesia, an attitude that found its first and purest source in the teachings of the Gospel. You remained firm in hope even amid affliction and, thanks to the character of your people and your faith, you have turned sorrow into joy! May the Lord grant that in other conflicts in various parts of the world the desire for peace will prevail, because unity is always superior to conflict; the peace of unity is always superior to conflict. This also requires a certain purification of memory, in order to heal wounds, to overcome hatred with reconciliation and confrontation with cooperation. It is good to speak of “the politics of the outstretched hand”, which is very wise rather than foolish, for when the outstretched hand senses betrayal, it knows how to resist, it knows how to move things forward.

Another praiseworthy event took place when, on the twentieth anniversary of the country’s independence, you incorporated as a national document the Declaration on Human Fraternity, and I am grateful for this, Mr President. I signed that Declaration together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi. You have done this so that – as the Declaration itself calls for – it can be adopted and included in school curricula. Indeed, this is fundamental.

At the same time, I urge you to continue with renewed confidence in the

prudent establishment and consolidation of the institutions of your Republic, so that the citizens can feel that they are truly represented and that the institutions are properly equipped to serve the people of Timor-Leste.

Now, a new horizon has opened before you, cleared of dark clouds, but with new challenges to face and new problems to solve. That is why I want to say: may the faith, which has enlightened and sustained you in the past, continue to inspire your present and future: *Que a vossa fé seja a vossa cultura!* That is to say, may it inspire principles, projects and choices in conformity with the Gospel.

Of the various current issues, I think of the phenomenon of emigration, which is always an indication of an insufficient or inadequate appreciation of resources; as well as the difficulty to provide everyone with a job that offers a fair salary and guarantees families an income corresponding to their basic needs. And this is not always an external phenomenon. In Italy, for example, there is emigration from the south to the north and we have a whole region in the south that is becoming depopulated.

I think too of the poverty present in so many rural areas, and the subsequent need for collective and wide-ranging action involving manifold efforts and leaders from all sectors – civil, religious and social – to remedy it and to offer viable alternatives to emigration.

Moreover, I think of what can be considered social scourges, such as the excessive use of alcohol by young people. Please take good care of this; give young people ideals to get them out of these traps! There is also the phenomenon of joining certain gangs, which are trained in martial arts; but instead of using this knowledge in the service of the defenceless, they use it as an opportunity to showcase the fleeting and harmful power of violence. Let us not forget, too, that these children and adolescents have their dignity violated, a phenomenon that is emerging across the world. In response, we are all called to do everything possible to prevent every kind of abuse and guarantee a healthy and peaceful childhood for all young people.

In order to solve these problems, and to achieve the optimal management of the country's natural resources – primarily oil and gas reserves, which could offer unprecedented possibilities for development – it is essential to prepare properly and provide appropriate training to those who will be called upon to be the country's leaders in the not-too-distant future. I liked what the President told me about education here. They will then have at their disposal all the necessary tools to develop a far-reaching plan focused exclusively on the common good.

The Church offers her social doctrine as the foundation for such a formative process. It constitutes an indispensable and trustworthy pillar on which to build various approaches and for verifying whether they truly favour integral development or are instead obstacles, producing unacceptable inequalities and a large number of people who are discarded or left on the margins. The Church's social

doctrine is not an ideology, instead it is based on fraternity. It is a doctrine that must promote; it promotes the development of peoples, especially the poorest.

Nevertheless, while there is no shortage of problems – as is the case with every people in every age – I invite you to remain confident and to keep a hopeful gaze toward the future. There is one thing that I would like to tell you: it was not in my address, but it is very close to my heart. This is a beautiful country, but what is the best thing this country has? Its people. Take good care of your people, love your people, help this people grow. It is a wonderful people, wonderful! In the few hours since my arrival, I have seen how the people express themselves, your people express themselves with dignity and with joy. It is a joyful people.

You are a young people. I am not referring to your culture and history, which are rather ancient, but to the fact that about sixty-five percent of Timor-Leste's population is under the age of thirty. I think of two countries in Europe where the average age is forty-six and forty-eight. Yet among you, sixty-five percent are under thirty years old, so we can think that the average age will be around thirty, or a little less. This is a richness. This statistic tells us that the first area for you to invest in is education. I am pleased about what I heard from the President, about what you are achieving. Keep moving forwards. I think there are already several universities, maybe even too many of them; there are several secondary schools, whereas perhaps twenty years ago there were not. This is a very high rate of growth. Invest, then, in education, in education within the family and education at school, in an education that puts children and young people at the centre and promotes their dignity. I was pleased to see the children smiling, with those white teeth! There were children from everywhere. The enthusiasm, freshness, forward-looking perspective, courage and resourcefulness, all typical of the young, combined with the experience and wisdom of the elderly, form a providential mixture of knowledge and a great impetus toward the future. And here, I would like to give a piece of advice: bring children and grandparents together. The encounter between children and grandparents brings about wisdom. Please reflect on that. Together, youthful enthusiasm and wisdom are a great resource that do not allow for passivity, still less for pessimism.

The Catholic Church, her social doctrine, institutions that provide assistance and charity to the needy and educational and health care institutions are at the service of all and are also a valuable resource, enabling everyone to look to the future with confidence and hope. In this regard, recognition should be given to the fact that the Church's commitment to the common good can rely on the cooperation and support of the State, within the framework of the cordial relations that have developed between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and reflected in the Agreement between the Parties that entered into force on 3 March 2016. Excellent relations.

Timor-Leste, which has been able to face times of great tribulation with patient determination and heroism, thrives today as a peaceful and democratic country, committed to building a fraternal society and developing peaceful relations with its neighbours in the international community. Looking at your recent past, and at what has been accomplished so far, there is reason to be confident that your nation will likewise be able to face intelligently, clearly and creatively the difficulties and problems of today. Please trust in the wisdom of the people. The people have their wisdom; trust in that wisdom.

I entrust Timor-Leste and all its people to the protection of the Immaculate Conception, heavenly Patroness invoked under the title of *Virgem de Aitara*. May she accompany you and help you always in your mission to build a free, democratic, united and joyful country where no one feels excluded and everyone can live in peace and dignity.

**TO BISHOPS, PRIESTS, DEACONS, CONSECRATED PERSONS,
SEMINARIANS AND CATECHISTS IN TIMOR-LESTE***

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Dili, Timor Leste, 10 September 2024

Your country, rooted in a long Christian history, also needs a renewed *impetus toward evangelization*, so that the Gospel's fragrance may reach everyone, a fragrance of reconciliation and peace after suffering years of war; a fragrance of compassion, which will help the poor get back on their feet and inspire a renewed commitment to revive the economic and social wellbeing of the country; a fragrance of justice against corruption. Be vigilant, please! Corruption can so often enter our communities, our parishes. In particular, the fragrance of the Gospel must be spread in order to counter anything that humiliates, disfigures or even destroys human life; to counter those plagues that cause inner emptiness and suffering such as alcoholism, violence, and disrespect for women. The Gospel of Jesus has the power to transform these dark realities and generate a new society. The message that you consecrated women give in the face of the phenomenon of the lack of respect for women is that women are the most important part of the Church because they take care of the most needy: they heal them, they accompany them. I have just come from a visit to a beautiful welcoming house for the poorest, the most needy [Irmãs Alma school for children with disabilities]. Dear Sisters, be mothers of the

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240910-timor-leste-religiosi.html>

people of God, be encouraged to “give birth” to communities, be mothers. That is what I ask of you.

[...] Dear friends, a Portuguese diplomat of the 1500s, Tomé Pires, wrote the following, “Malaysian merchants say that God created Timor for sandalwood” (*The Suma Oriental*, London 1944, 204). We, however, know that there is also another fragrance, in addition to sandalwood, there is another, which is the fragrance of Christ and the Gospel, a fragrance that enriches life and fills us with joy.

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN SINGAPORE*

Theatre of the Cultural Centre of the National University, 12 September 2024

Singapore is a mosaic of ethnicities, cultures and religions living together in harmony, and this word is very important: harmony. The achievement and preservation of this positive inclusiveness is facilitated by the impartiality of public authorities who engage in constructive dialogue with all, thus making it possible for everyone to make their own unique contribution to the common good and preventing extremism and intolerance from gaining strength or endangering social harmony. Mutual respect, cooperation, dialogue and the freedom to exercise one’s beliefs within the confines of the law are the conditions that allow for Singapore’s success and stability. They are necessary for avoiding conflict and chaos and provide instead for a balanced and sustainable development.

From the very beginning of its presence in Singapore, the Catholic Church has sought to offer its own distinctive contribution to the progress of the nation, especially in the areas of education and healthcare. This was possible thanks to the spirit of sacrifice and dedication of missionaries and the faithful. Always animated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Catholic community is also at the forefront of works of charity, contributing significantly to humanitarian efforts and managing several healthcare institutions and many humanitarian organizations, including Caritas which is well known.

According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on relations with non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*, the Church has also constantly promoted interreligious dialogue and cooperation between different faith

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240912-singapore-autorita.html>

communities, in a spirit of openness and mutual respect, which are fundamental for building a just and peaceful society.

[...] Your commitment to sustainable development and the preservation of creation is an example to follow, and your search for innovative solutions to address environmental challenges can encourage other countries to do the same. Singapore is a shining example of what humanity can achieve by working together in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and a spirit of inclusiveness and fraternity. This resembles a summary of your attitude: working together, in harmony, with a sense of responsibility and in a spirit of fraternity and inclusiveness. I encourage you to continue on this path, trusting in God's promise and his fatherly love for all.

TO THE INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN SINGAPORE*

“Catholic Junior College”, 13 September 2024

Young people are courageous and like to seek the truth but they have to be careful not to become what you referred to as “armchair critics” with endless words. A young person must be a critical thinker, and it is not good never to be critical. But you must be constructive in criticism, because there is a destructive criticism, which only makes a lot of complaints but does not offer a new way forward. I ask all young people, each of you: are you critical thinkers? Do you have the courage to criticize but also the courage to let others criticize you? Because, if you criticize, then someone else will criticize you. This is sincere dialogue between young people.

Young people must have the courage to build, to move forward and go out of their “comfort zones”. A young person who chooses always to spend his or her time in “comfort” is a young person who becomes fat! Not fatter in body, but fatter in mind! That is why I say to young people, “Take risks, go out! Do not be afraid!”. Fear is a dictatorial attitude that paralyses you. It is true that young people often make mistakes, many mistakes, and it would be good if each one of us – if each of you – could think about how many times you have made mistakes. We make mistakes because we started walking and we make mistakes on the journey. This is normal; the important thing to realize is that you have made mistakes. Let us see who can answer my question: What is worse, making a mistake because I started to walk or not making a mistake because I stayed at home? Everyone, the latter! A

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240913-singapore-giovani.html>

young person who does not take risks, who is afraid of making mistakes, is already old! Do you understand this?

You have also talked about the media. Today there are so many options, so many possibilities for using the media, cell phone, or television. I would like to ask you: is it good to use media or is it not good? Let us think about this. What is a young person who does not use media like? He or she is closed. What about young people who live totally enslaved to the media, what are they like? They are lost. All young people should use the media, but in a manner that can help us move forward, not in a way that can enslave us. Understood? Do you agree or disagree?

One of the things that has impressed me most about the young people here is your capacity for interfaith dialogue. This is very important because if you start arguing, "My religion is more important than yours....," or "Mine is the true one, yours is not true....," where does this lead? Somebody answer. [A young person answers, "Destruction".] That is correct. All religions are paths to God. I will use an analogy; they are like different languages that express the divine. But God is for everyone, and therefore, we are all God's children. "But my God is more important than yours!". Is this true? There is only one God, and religions are like languages, paths to reach God. Some Sikh, some Muslim, some Hindu, some Christian. Understood? Yet, interfaith dialogue among young people takes courage. The age of youth is the age of courage, but you can misuse this courage to do things that will not help you. Instead, you should have courage to move forward and to dialogue.

One thing that helps a lot with dialogue is respect. I will tell you one thing. I don't know if it happens here, in this city, but in other cities it happens that among young people something bad occurs: bullying. I ask you: who is the bravest to tell me what they think about bullying? [Some young people respond] Thank you! Everyone has provided a definition of bullying but with a different aspect. Whether it is verbal or physical bullying, it is always an aggression. Always. Just think about what happens in schools or children's groups: bullying targets those who are weaker. For example, a disabled boy or girl. Instead, we saw here this beautiful dance with disabled children! Each one of us has our own abilities and limitations. Do we all have abilities? [Answer: "Yes!"] Do we all have some limitations? [Answer: "Yes!"] Even the Pope? Yes, all, all! As we have our limitations, we must respect the disabilities of others. Do you agree? This is important. Why do I say this? Because overcoming these things helps in your interfaith dialogue since it is built upon respect for others. This is very important.

Any further questions? No? I want to thank you and repeat what Raaj told us: to do everything we can so as to maintain a courageous attitude and promote a space where young people can go and dialogue. This is because your dialogue is one that creates a path, and that leads the way forward. If you dialogue as young people, you will also dialogue as adults; you will dialogue as citizens, and as politi-

cians. I would like to tell you something about history: with every dictatorship in history, the first thing it does is to cut off dialogue.

I thank you for these questions, and I am glad to meet you young people, to meet these brave, almost “shameless ones,” you are good! My wish is that all of you young people will go forward with hope, and not go backwards! Take risks! Otherwise, you will grow “fatter”! God bless you and pray for me, I do for you.

And now, in silence, let us pray for each other. In silence.

PRESS CONFERENCE DURING THE RETURN FLIGHT FROM SINGAPORE*

Papal flight, 13 September 2024

Question from Stefania Falasca, *Tianou Zhiku*

Good evening, Holy Father. Unfortunately, I do not speak Chinese! We have just come from Singapore, where the population is predominantly Chinese, and it is a model of peaceful coexistence. Regarding peace, I would like to know your thoughts, especially given Singapore’s proximity to mainland China, on China’s efforts to achieve a ceasefire in conflict regions like Gaza. In July, the Beijing Declaration was signed to end Palestinian divisions. Could there be areas of cooperation on peace between China and the Holy See? And lastly, we are approaching the renewal of the agreement between China and the Holy See on the appointment of bishops. Are you satisfied with the results and dialogue so far?

Pope Francis’ answer

I will take the last question. I am pleased with the dialogue with China. The results are good. Even for the appointment of bishops, things are progressing with goodwill. I have spoken with the Secretariat of State, and I am happy with how things are going. As for China, I see China as an aspiration, meaning I would like to visit China. It’s a great country, and I admire and respect China.

It’s a country with an ancient culture. China’s capacity for dialogue to understand each other goes beyond the different systems of government it has had. I believe China is a promise and a hope for the Church. Collaboration is possible,

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240913-singapore-voloritorno.html>

and certainly regarding conflicts. Cardinal Zuppi is working in this area, and he has contacts with China.

**MESSAGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING FOR PEACE ORGANIZED
BY THE COMMUNITY OF SANT'EGIDIO***
(Paris, 22-24 September 2024)

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 17 September 2024

[...] each year, as representatives of the world's great religions and men and women of good will, you have journeyed as pilgrims to different cities in Europe and throughout the world, in order to keep alive the spirit of Assisi. In doing so, you remind us of the challenge to which my predecessor, Saint John Paul II, referred in his words at the end of that memorable day. "More perhaps than ever before in history," he pointed out, "the intrinsic link between an authentic religious attitude and the great good of peace has become evident to all... Together we have filled our eyes with visions of peace: they release energies for a new language of peace, for new gestures of peace, gestures which will shatter the fatal chains of divisions inherited from history or spawned by modern ideologies. Peace awaits its builders". The spirit of Assisi is a blessing for this world of ours, still torn by numerous wars and acts of violence. The "spirit" of Assisi must blow even stronger in the sails of dialogue and friendship between peoples.

This year you are meeting in Paris, and this evening you are gathered before the Cathedral that, after the tragic fire, is about to reopen its doors for prayer. How much we need to pray for peace! The risk that the many conflicts in our world, rather than ceasing, will dangerously spread, is all too real. I join my voice to your plea, and that of all the victims of war, in urging political leaders: "Stop war! Stop wars!". We are now destroying the world! Let us stop while there is still time!

May this meeting encourage all believers to rediscover their vocation to nurture fraternity between peoples in our time. All too often in the past, religions were used to fuel conflicts and wars. The danger of this continues, even in our own day.

Allow me to reiterate once more the conviction that I expressed together with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: "Religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20240917-messaggio-pace-parigi.html>

of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women”. We must keep religions from giving in to the temptation to become a means of fuelling forms of nationalism, ethnocentrism and populism. Wars only escalate. Woe to those who try to drag God into taking sides in wars!

The urgent task of the religions is to foster visions of peace, as you are demonstrating these days in Paris. As men and women of different cultures and religious beliefs, you have experienced the power and beauty of universal fraternity. This is the vision our world needs today. I encourage you to persevere in your efforts to be artisans of peace. If others continue to make war, together we can work for peace. In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, I urged believers to “contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society. Dialogue between the followers of different religions does not take place simply for the sake of diplomacy, consideration or tolerance. In the words of the Bishops of India, ‘the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love’”.

It is against this backdrop that the title of this Paris Meeting – “*Imagine Peace*” – is most eloquent. We need to keep meeting, to weave bonds of fraternity and to allow ourselves to be guided by the divine inspiration present in every faith, in order to join in “imagining peace” among all peoples. We need such occasions to speak with one another and to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor. In a world at risk of being fragmented by conflicts and wars, the efforts made by believers are invaluable for holding out visions of peace and fostering fraternity and peace among peoples everywhere.

In my Encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*, I “imagined” a future for this world of ours: a single home (our planet) and a single family (that of all peoples). God has entrusted all of us with the responsibility to encourage and lead the members of our human family to live together in fraternity and peace.

**VIDEO MESSAGE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN MEETING (MED24)
“PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND BUILDERS OF PEACE”
(Tirana, 15-20 September 2024)**

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 17 September 2024

Dear Friends, dear young people from Albania and from the Mediterranean area, it’s a great joy for me to know you are gathered in Tirana ten years after my

visit to your beloved country, in 2014 – and I don't forget, be sure! –, and I remember of that unforgettable journey, when I met your people, a people enriched with several different faces but united by the same courage. As I told in that occasion to the youth: “You are the new generation of Albania” (*Angelus*, Tirana, 21 September 2014). Now I want to add, for you dear young people coming from the five shores of the Mediterranean Sea: “you, the new generation, are the future of the Mediterranean region”.

We are all pilgrims of hope, walking in search of the truth, living our faith and building peace – because peace needs to be built! God loves every man; He makes no differences among us. The fraternity between the five shores of the Mediterranean that you are establishing it is the answer – really it's an answer! –, the best answer we can offer to the conflicts and the deadly indifferences.

I invite you to learn together to discern the signs of the times. Contemplate the difference of your traditions like a richness, a richness God wants to be. Unity is not uniformity, and the diversity of your cultural and religious identities is a gift of God. Unity in diversity. Let mutual esteem grow among you, following the witness of your forefathers.

Put in the middle the voice of those who are not considered, and here I'm thinking of the poorest people, all those who suffer to be regarded as a burden or a trouble. I'm thinking about those who are forced to leave their countries, even in a very young age, to search a better future. Please, take care of everybody: they are not simply numbers, but persons, and each person is sacred. We are talking about individual faces whose dignity must be improved and protected. Let's renounce the culture of indifference, to open the door of acceptance and friendship.

Just like in a great Lake of Tiberias that is now entrusted to your care, you inhabit the shores of this sea that connects you – Mediterranean connects you! It gathers you just like in a beautiful garden you are called to cultivate. Then you preserve the spirit of service in every circumstance, taking care of each creature entrusted to your hands. You may walk following the footsteps of your martyrs. Their courage is a living witness that can inspire your commitment in resisting to all violence disfiguring our humanity, as Blessed Maria Taci made, when she was only 22 years old.

I commend all of you to Mary, “Mother of Good Counsel”. She had always turned her maternal glaze, in love as in sorrow, on the events of your land. You learn from her Immaculate Heart to be unresting pilgrims of hope and to follow the signs of God, so that Mediterranean area may recover his best feature: the expression of fraternity and peace, and it could be no longer a graveyard!

TO THE CENTRE FOR ADVANCED FORMATION “LAUDATO SI”*

Thursday, 19 September 2024

To make the desire to promote ecological conversion visible and concrete, I thought of creating a tangible model of thought, structure and action, which I called *Borgo Laudato si'*. And I felt that the amenities and outbuildings of the Villas of Castel Gandolfo were the right space to host this sort of “laboratory” for experimentation with formative content.

To this end, at the beginning of 2023 I established the *Laudato si' Centre for Higher Education*, as a body for scientific, educational and social activity. It is endowed with its own patrimonial, technical, administrative and accounting autonomy, and works for the integral formation of the person in the context of a sustainable economy and according to the principles of the Encyclical *Laudato si'*.

In the months following its constitution, the *Laudato si' Centre for Higher Education* set to work to develop the “Borgo” project. Assisted by national and international experts of the highest level, the Centre outlined the three main directions of the project: inclusive education in integral ecology, the circular and generative economy, and environmental sustainability.

After months of intense work, the Executive Board of the Centre for Higher Education presented the result to me: it is a complex, multi-faceted project, involving various aspects of integral ecology. One of the essential elements is without doubt agriculture, which in the *Borgo Laudato si'* is intended to be distinguished in terms of its sustainability and diversification, investing in infrastructure, irrigation systems and the development of agricultural techniques respecting the ecosystem and biodiversity.

The Borgo’s agricultural project includes the development of a new vineyard for wine production. It is intended to act as a synthesis of tradition and innovation, as a ‘trademark’ of the Borgo. In this, too, the *Centre for Higher Education* has drawn on the advice of some of the leading experts, because the intention is to strive for excellence. It is very important not to remain “average”, because from average one heads towards mediocrity. Always strive for excellence.

I was particularly pleased to note that, for both cultivation and agricultural production - and the vineyard in particular - a large amount of labour is involved. This responds to the intention agreed upon at the outset to strive for the restoration

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240919-alta-formazione-laudatosi.html>

of good and fruitful relations between the human family and creation, through labour that cares for and cherishes what has been entrusted to us by the Creator.

Dear friends, I wish to express my thanks to all of you who, in various ways, are collaborating in this important project. I am sure that the fruit of this collaboration will well represent those principles of integral ecology that I wished to highlight in the Encyclical *Laudato si'* and in the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*.

ENCUENTRO CON LOS MOVIMIENTOS POPULARES PROMOVIDO POR EL DICASTERIO PARA EL DESARROLLO HUMANO INTEGRAL*

Palacio de San Calixto, 20 de septiembre de 2024

[...] Sí, de los pobres dependemos todos, todos, también los ricos. Lo dije al principio del pontificado. Me cito a mí mismo: “Mientras no se resuelvan radicalmente los problemas de los pobres, renunciando a la autonomía absoluta de los mercados y de la especulación financiera, y atacando las causas estructurales de la inequidad, no se resolverán los problemas del mundo y, en definitiva, ningún problema. La inequidad es raíz de los males sociales”. Sé que esto molesta, pero es verdad.

[...] Lamentablemente, muchas veces son precisamente los más ricos los que se oponen a la realización de la justicia social o la ecología integral por pura avaricia. Disfrazan, sí, esta avaricia con ideología, pero es la vieja y conocida avaricia. Entonces, presionan a los gobiernos para que sostengan malas políticas que los favorecen económicamente. Mi abuela nos repetía siempre: “Estén atentos, que el diablo entra por los bolsillos”. El diablo entra por los bolsillos, siempre. Que una coima aquí, que una cosa allá, que un... y te entra por los bolsillos. Me contaba un emprendedor internacional que está haciendo en Argentina inversiones de extensión de eso que ellos llevaban adelante, que trabajan muy bien y hay un buen acuerdo, que fue a presentar a un Ministro el nuevo plan de nuevas extensiones y el Ministro lo atendió muy bien y le dijo: “Déjemelo, ya lo van a llamar”. Al día siguiente, lo llamó el secretario del Ministro y le dijo: “Mire, usted dentro de dos días puede pasar, así ya le entregamos el permiso y todo”. Pasó, le entregó todos los papeles, la firma, y cuando él se estaba por levantar, le dice: “¿Y para nosotros

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240920-movimenti-popolari.html>

cuánto?”. “¿Y para nosotros cuánto?”. La coima, ¿no? El diablo entra por el bolsillo, no se olviden.

Escuché que algunos de los hombres más ricos del mundo reconocen esto. Dicen que el sistema que les permitió amasar fortunas a las personas ricas —y permítanme agregar, a veces ridículas— es inmoral, que debe ser modificado. Que debe haber más impuestos a los billonarios. Eso está muy bien. Y rezo para que los económicamente poderosos salgan del aislamiento, rechacen la falsa seguridad del dinero y se abran para compartir bienes que tienen un destino universal porque todos derivan de la Creación. Todos los bienes derivan de ahí y todos los bienes tienen destino universal.

Es difícil que eso pase, es difícil, pero para Dios todo es posible. Si ese porcentaje tan pequeño de billonarios que acapara la mayor parte de la riqueza del planeta se animara a compartirla... Pero no como limosna, no, a compartirla fraternalmente. Si se animara a compartirla, qué bueno sería para ellos mismos y qué justo sería para todos. Pido a los privilegiados de este mundo que se animen a dar este paso. Van a ser mucho más felices y seremos más hermanos todavía.

Pero también hace tiempo dije que: “los pobres no pueden esperar”. Si los movimientos populares no reclaman, si ustedes no gritan, si ustedes no luchan, si ustedes no despiertan conciencias, las cosas van a ser más difíciles. Pregunto a ustedes, también a las personas de clase media que cada vez tienen que sacrificarse más para llegar a fin de mes, pregunto a las personas que tienen que pagar alquileres altísimos, que no pueden ahorrar, que tal vez dejan a sus hijos una situación peor a la que recibieron: ¿ustedes creen que los más ricos van a compartir lo que tienen con los demás o van a seguir acumulando insaciablemente? Una pregunta.

No tengo yo el monopolio de la interpretación de la realidad social. Escucho. Tampoco tengo la bola de cristal (y no existe ninguna bola de cristal mágica, esas son estafas). Sí veo una cosa que me preocupa: que avanza una forma perversa de ver la realidad, una forma que exalta la acumulación de riquezas como si fuera una virtud. Les digo: no es una virtud, es un vicio. Las riquezas son para compartir, para crear, para fraternizar. Acumular no es virtuoso, no es virtuoso, distribuir sí lo es. Jesús no acumulaba, sino que multiplicaba y sus discípulos distribuían. Recuerden que Jesús nos dijo: “No acumulen tesoros en la tierra, donde la polilla y la herrumbre los consumen, y los ladrones perforan las paredes y los roban. Acumulen, en cambio, tesoros en el cielo, donde no hay polilla ni herrumbre que los consuma, ni ladrones que perforen y roben. Allí donde esté tu tesoro, ahí también estará tu corazón”. Hay como una atracción —yo diría— de “noviazgo” entre el corazón y las riquezas, pero no es el noviazgo lindo con la novia, es el noviazgo con la suegra. Cuidado.

La competencia ciega por tener más y más dinero no es una fuerza creativa, sino una actitud enfermiza, un camino a la perdición. Esa conducta irresponsable,

inmoral e irracional, destruye la creación y divide a los pueblos. No dejemos de denunciarla. Una anécdota de mi familia: unos primos de papá —o sea primos segundos míos—, había uno que era muy rico, muy rico. No tenían hijos, pero era avaro, avaro, avaro, y juntaba plata y juntaba y juntaba y juntaba. A tal punto era avaro que los hijos cuidaban a su mamá enferma un día cada uno y le tenían que dar un yogurt a la mañana y uno a la tarde. Este le daba medio yogurt a la mañana para ahorrar el de la tarde, a ese nivel llegaba. Este murió. Yo no pude ir al entierro, pero llamé a una prima dos, tres días después y le pregunté: “¿Cómo estuvo aquello?”. Qué se yo. “Trágico”, me dijo. “¿Qué pasó?”. No podían cerrar el cajón. ¿Qué? Se quería llevar todo. Y lo tiene que dejar, no hay vuelta que darle. Es el destino.

El grito de los excluidos también puede despertar las conciencias adormecidas de tantos dirigentes políticos que son, en definitiva, los que deben hacer cumplir los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales que ya están consagrados por la Constitución, por las leyes, pero no se cumplen. Derechos reconocidos por casi todos los países, derechos reconocidos por las Naciones Unidas, por la doctrina social de todas las religiones, pero que muchas veces no se manifiestan en la realidad socioeconómica de los pueblos. Somos cristianos. Recemos para que Dios nos dé la sabiduría y la fortaleza para realizar la verdadera justicia social.

La Justicia Social es una expresión creada por la Iglesia, es inseparable de la compasión. Dios tiene tres atributos: cercanía, misericordia y compasión. Si nosotros queremos hacer una cosa de tipo social, por ejemplo, tenemos que ir con estos tres atributos. La justicia social es inseparable de la compasión. En Indonesia hablé de esto. ¿Saben qué es la compasión? Seguro que sí. Compasión significa padecer con el otro, compartir sus sentimientos. Es una palabra hermosa. Como sabemos, en efecto, la compasión no consiste en dar limosna a los hermanos y hermanas necesitados, mirándolos de arriba hacia abajo, viéndolos desde las propias seguridades y privilegios, compasión significa hacernos cercanos unos a los otros. Cuando yo confieso, que Dios me dio la gracia de perdonar, en 53 años de cura nunca negué una absolución. Cuando yo confieso le pregunto si dan limosna. ¿A quién se lo puedo preguntar? Gente adulta. Me dicen que sí. Y cuando vos das limosna, ¿mirás a los ojos a quien le das la limosna? ¿Tocás la mano o le tirás la plata y hacés así? No saben contestar. Dan la limosna, pero no tienen esa compasión que es carnal, que es fraterna, que es honda.

Sea que compartimos los mismos padecimientos, sea que nos conmovemos con el sufrimiento de los otros. La verdadera compasión construye la unidad de los pueblos y la belleza del mundo.

Las ideologías deshumanizadas promueven una cultura muy fea, la “cultura del ganador” que es un aspecto de la “cultura del descarte”. Algunos llaman a esto “meritocracia”, otros no la nombran, pero la practican. Es gente que, parada

sobre ciertos éxitos mundanos, se siente con el derecho de despreciar; despreciar en forma altanera a los “perdedores”. Es paradójico que muchas veces las grandes fortunas poco tienen que ver con el mérito: son rentas, son herencias, son fruto de la explotación de personas y expoliación de la naturaleza, son producto de la especulación financiera o la evasión impositiva, derivan de la corrupción o del crimen organizado. En general, muchas fortunas se amasan así.

Nadie, meritorio o sin méritos, tiene derecho a mirar de arriba a abajo al otro, como si no valiera nada. Esa actitud altanera es lo contrario de la compasión: regodearse en la propia supremacía frente a quien está peor. Y esto no pasa sólo con los más ricos, ya que mucha gente cae en esa tentación de nuestro tiempo. Mirar desde lejos, mirar desde arriba, mirar con indiferencia, mirar con desprecio, mirar con odio. Así se gesta la violencia: así se gesta el silencio de la indiferencia. Ese silencio indiferente que habilita el rugido del odio. El silencio frente a la justicia —perdón—, frente a la injusticia abre paso a la división social, y la división social abre paso a la violencia verbal, y la violencia verbal abre paso a la violencia física, y la violencia física a la guerra de todos contra todos. Y ahí está la cola del diablo. Me hicieron ver una represión, un filmado de una represión hace una semana, un poco menos quizás. Obreros, gente que pedía por sus derechos en la calle, y la policía la rechazaba con una cosa que es lo más caro que hay, ese gas pimienta de primera calidad porque no tenían derecho a reclamar lo suyo. Porque eran revoltosos, comunistas, no, no, no, y el gobierno se puso firme y en vez de pagar justicia social pagó el gas pimienta, le convenía. Ténganlo en cuenta eso. Todos debemos levantar a los demás. Todos debemos hacerlo.

La actitud contraria es “dejar tirado”, y, a veces, además, burlarse del caído. Después vienen las excusas, “¿Acaso yo soy el guardián de mi hermano?”. Creo que es la justificación, no la primera, es la segunda justificación más antigua de la Biblia. ¿Acaso yo soy el guardián de mi hermano? “No tengo tiempo, que se ocupe otro”. “Es su culpa, no miró por dónde pisaba, se metió en un camino peligroso, no era suficientemente inteligente, no se esforzó como yo”. Esa actitud no es cristiana, peor, tampoco es humana, no es la actitud de un hombre de buena voluntad: ¡Nosotros levantemos al caído, siempre, siempre! Solamente una vez en la vida, solamente en una situación se puede mirar a una persona de arriba a abajo: para ayudarla a levantarse. Nunca en otra situación, siempre de frente. Levantemos al caído siempre, a todos los caídos, buenos o malos, con méritos o sin ellos. Que nadie quede tirado, por favor. Y hay tantos tirados por la calle, tantos tirados, tanta gente que no tiene qué comer y que está ahí por la calle pidiendo algo, que perdió la casa, que perdió el trabajo o que simplemente es gente que no tuvo la capacidad de andar adelante. Puede ser gente enferma, lo que vos quieras, pero están tirados. Miremos al tirado, que nadie quede tirado, y ahí sí mirar de arriba a abajo para levantarlo.

[...] Si se elimina el amor como categoría teológica, categoría ética, económica y política, perdemos el rumbo. En la matemática avara de la conveniencia, del individualismo y la acumulación no hay lugar para eso. Con el velo negro del desamor, caemos siempre en alguna forma de “darwinismo social”. ¿Y saben lo que es eso? El darwinismo social es la ley del más fuerte, que justifica primero la indiferencia, después la crueldad y, finalmente, el exterminio. Y eso viene siempre del Maligno.

La justicia social, también la ecología integral, no sólo se entiende a partir del amor. El derecho natural a la dignidad que merecen todas las personas, el mandato que tenemos todas las sociedades de garantizar la satisfacción de las necesidades básicas, la obligación universal de preservar la naturaleza para quienes vienen después de nosotros, nada de eso surge de una ideología ni de una tabla de multiplicar, sino del amor. No nos olvidemos que “sin el amor somos nada”.

Todos tenemos la misión de hacer efectivo ese amor en nuestra vida cotidiana, en nuestras relaciones familiares, en la acción específica de cada espacio comunitario. En las microrelaciones y en las macrorelaciones todo esto tenemos derecho a hacerlo. Constaté en varias oportunidades cómo a partir de lo pequeño y desde las periferias surge esa gran esperanza del corazón, que nos anima a elevar la mirada hacia lo alto, hacia horizontes más extensos, que nos dan la fuerza para acometer proyectos de gran alcance que abracen a más personas. Que la luz de cada experiencia comunitaria concreta irradie su luz para que la humanidad toda pueda cruzar las oscuras quebradas y retomar el camino concreto.

[...] Hace poco advertí a los habitantes de Timor sobre ciertos cocodrilos —porque hay unos cocodrilos especiales que vienen desde Australia y dicen que tienen la mordida más fuerte de todos los que muerden— y es curioso: estos, cuando van a la playa, caminan como los canguros. Con la fuerza de la cola pegan los saltos. Entonces les advertí: tengan cuidado con los cocodrilos que quieren cambiarles la cultura, morderles la historia, hacerles olvidar lo que son. El colonialismo material y el colonialismo ideológico-cultural van siempre juntos devorando la riqueza material e inmaterial de los pueblos. Pienso en algunas experiencias de mi país, donde el colonialismo se llama litio y se explota a tanta gente.

Los valores universales, en cambio, crecen desde las raíces de cada pueblo, desde su propia belleza que aporta un nuevo plano al poliedro maravilloso de la familia humana y de la casa común. Hay intereses que son globales, pero no universales. Recordemos esto: globales pero no universales. Es decir, buscan uniformar y someterlo todo. Tengan cuidado con eso porque los cocodrilos vienen camuflados; tengan cuidado, pero no tengan miedo.

La cobardía lleva a muchos políticos a cambiar sus convicciones por sus conveniencias. Cuando te ungen la mano, ¿no? ¿En cuánto voy prendido? Los pasaron por la amansadora de grandes medios, las redes sociales, tuvieron miedo y claudica-

ron. Adoptaron entonces posturas serviles frente a los económicamente poderosos como en aquella escena del Libro de Daniel en que “los altos funcionarios, autoridades, gobernadores, asesores, tesoreros, jueces y magistrados” se postraron a rendir culto a una estatua de oro para salvarse del horno. Renegar los ideales nobles y generosos para servir al dios dinero o al poder es una gran apostasía. No sólo sucede con los dirigentes políticos, sino también con actores sociales, sindicales, artistas e intelectuales, y también con los curas. Dicen que las sotanas tienen unos bolsillos enormes. Sucede eso.

Caer en gracia a los dueños del poder real trae ventajas, ayuda a trepar, ese verbo no se lo olviden, a trepar en la pirámide burocrática del poder formal. ¿Cómo? A trepar en esa pirámide burocrática del poder formal, pero es una traición. Los que trepan y trepan y trepan llegan arriba —creo que lo dije—. Cuando llegan arriba, cuando están arriba, ¿qué cosa muestran? Mi abuela me enseñó eso. Están arriba y lo único que muestran es el trasero. Esa es la esencia de la corrupción. Y esto a veces va de manera abierta, con discursos inhumanos que se convierten en políticas injustas por acción; otra manera encubierta, con discursos edulcorados que también se convierten en políticas injustas por omisión. Para descubrir de qué madera está hecho un dirigente —y esto no lo olvidemos— y cuando hablo de dirigente, hablo en el sentido genérico de la palabra, también un cura, un obispo. ¿De qué madera está hecho un dirigente? no hay que escuchar tanto lo que él dice: hay que ver lo que hace. La realidad siempre es superior a la idea. No se olviden de este principio: la realidad es superior a la idea. Vos podrás dar buenas ideas y hablar, pero la realidad tuya, ¿cuál es?

Ustedes tienen que ayudar a los políticos para que no se entreguen a los cocodrilos, para que no se arrodillen ante la estatua de oro por miedo al horno. Ustedes tienen que ser custodios de la Justicia Social. Tienen que estar ahí para recordarles al servicio de quién están. Ustedes tienen que estar ahí como la viuda del evangelio, insistiendo, insistiendo, rompiendo la paciencia para que hagan justicia. Esa es una táctica que nos enseñó Jesús. Seguramente encontrarán otras tácticas, pero siempre dentro de la no-violencia, por favor trabajen siempre por la paz. La guerra es un crimen.

[...] Nuestro camino sigue soñando y trabajando juntos para que trabajadores tengan derechos, todas las familias techo, todos los campesinos tierra, todos los niños educación, todos los jóvenes futuro, todos los ancianos una buena jubilación, todas las mujeres igualdad de derechos, todos los pueblos soberanía, todos los indígenas territorio, todos los migrantes acogida, todas las etnias respeto, todos los credos libertad, todas las regiones paz, todos los ecosistemas protección. Es un camino permanente, habrá avances y retrocesos, habrá errores y aciertos, pero no tengan duda: es el camino correcto. Y si algún día están aburridos y quieren confrontarse,

confróntense con la sonrisa de un bebé, de un niño y con la sonrisa pícaro de un viejito o una viejita. Esa será la piedra de toque.

Les hablo desde el corazón: rezo por ustedes, rezo junto a ustedes, y le pido a nuestro Padre que los proteja y los bendiga, que los llene de su amor y los guíe en su camino, otorgándoles generosamente esa fuerza que nos sostiene, esa fuerza que es la esperanza. La esperanza no defrauda, es la virtud más débil, es la más débil, pero no defrauda. Esa esperanza que no defrauda. No nos cansemos de decir: ¡Ninguna persona sin dignidad! ¡Ninguna persona sin esperanza!

TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES*

Monday, 23 September 2024

As our world faces grave social, political and environmental challenges, we see clearly the need for a larger framework in which inclusive public discourse is not only informed by different scientific disciplines, but also by the participation of all segments of society. In this regard, I welcome and commend highly the Academy's desire to draw attention to marginalized and poor people in its various Conferences, and to include indigenous peoples and their wisdom in its dialogues.

Your Plenary Assembly this year also addresses emerging new science and innovations, and related opportunities for science and planetary health. Here I think particularly of the challenges posed by the progress made in Artificial Intelligence. Such development can prove beneficial to humanity, for instance by advancing innovations in the fields of medicine and health care, as well as by helping to protect the natural environment and enabling the sustainable use of resources in the light of climate change. Yet, as we realize, it can also have serious negative implications for the general population, especially children and more vulnerable adults. Furthermore, the risks of manipulative applications of Artificial Intelligence for shaping public opinion, influencing consumer choices and interfering with electoral processes need to be acknowledged and prevented.

These challenges remind us of the invariably human and ethical dimensions of all scientific and technological progress. I would express once more, therefore, the Church's concern that "the inherent dignity of each human being and the fraternity that binds us together as members of the one human family must undergird the development of new technologies... Technological developments

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240923-plenaria-accademia-scienze.html>

that do not lead to an improvement in the quality of life of all humanity, but on the contrary aggravate inequalities and conflicts, can never count as true progress” (*Message for the 2024 World Day of Peace*, 2). In this sense, the impact of forms of Artificial Intelligence on individual peoples and the international community calls for greater attention and study. I am pleased to know that the Pontifical Academy of Sciences is working, for its part, to propose appropriate regulations for the sake of preventing risks and encouraging benefits in this complex field.

TO THE DELEGATION OF “THE ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO”*

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall, 25 September 2024

You may have met many teachers in the course of your studies or work experiences or have even engaged in sincere dialogue with everyone, yet turning to the Gospel guarantees you an exceptional Master, Jesus, the only one who was able to say: “I am the way, and the truth and the life” (*Jn 14:6*).

Now a new phase begins for you. This beautiful reality of yours must grow, become stronger, reach more and more young people, and bear the fruits typical of the Gospel and goodness. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do, which has exceeded all expectations. I wanted to focus on you, because young people have their whole lives ahead of them, they are a living “path”, and good things can come from such a path, while at the same time being careful to avoid the bad things.

The world of economics is in need of change. You will not change it only by becoming ministers, Nobel Prize winners or great economists, which are all good things. Rather you will change it above all by loving it, in the light of God, by injecting into it the values and strength of goodness, with the evangelical spirit of Francis of Assisi: he was the son of a merchant, he knew the merits and defects of that world! Love the economy, concretely love the workers, the poor, prioritizing the situations of greatest suffering.

That is why I wanted to base the whole “Economy of Francis” movement on Saint Francis of Assisi who, by simply stripping himself of everything for the love of Jesus and the poor, also gave a new impetus to the development of the economy.

Today I would like to leave you with three words: *be witnesses, do not be afraid, hope without tiring*. Be witnesses, do not be afraid, hope without tiring.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240925-economy-of-francesco.html>

First, *be witnesses*. If you want other young people to approach the economy with your ideals, those that we agreed to in the Assisi Covenant of 24 September 2022, it will be your witness of life that will attract them. Be consistent in your choices – consistency is not in fashion today! Seek to be appreciated for your projects and achievements, not for being numerous and powerful. Instead, transmit to many what you have received, namely the “good news” that, inspired by the Gospel, even the economy can change for the better.

Second: *do not be afraid*. I repeat what I said to the young people at WYD in Lisbon: “do not be administrators of fears, but entrepreneurs of dreams”. Pursue your dreams. There is so much to do, we must dare to use new words: Christians have always done this, they have never been afraid of novelties. They know that God is the Lord of history. It hurts me to see those Christians who hide in the sacristies because they are afraid of the world. They are not Christians; they are “defeated retirees”. Christians know that God is the Lord of history and they keep going forward.

Third word: *hope without tiring*. I know it is not easy to propose a new economy against a backdrop of new and old wars, while the arms industry prospers by taking resources away from the poor. Did you know that in some countries the most profitable investments are the manufacturing of arms? They profit by killing. In these cases, democracy is threatened, populism and inequalities grow, and the planet is increasingly wounded. It is not easy, in fact, it is very difficult. Perhaps sometimes you have the impression that you are “tilting at windmills”. So let us remember what Jesus said to the disciples: “Do not be afraid”. He will help you, and the Church will not leave you alone.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development – Sister Alessandra Smerilli is here – continues to stand by your side, opening to you, as far as possible, the doors of cooperation with the particular Churches scattered throughout the world. This will help you to establish contacts and synergies with many realities and networks of people who share your same ideals. The Dicastery will also accompany the activities of the Foundation, whose constitutional documents I am receiving today, and it will be the reality with which you will be able to give life and substance to the dream of changing the economy of today and giving a soul to the economy of tomorrow. In your midst, may a new way of being together and doing business be born that does not produce waste but material and spiritual well-being.

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO LUXEMBOURG AND BELGIUM

(26-29 September 2024)

MEETING WITH THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY*

Notre-Dame Cathedral, Luxembourg, 26 September 2024

[...] Let us reflect on three words: *service, mission and joy*.

First of all, service. We just heard it said that the Church in Luxembourg wants to be “the Church of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve” (cf. *Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45*). In this regard, the image of Saint Francis embracing the leper and curing his wounds was also put forth. In connection to service, I would like to emphasize an aspect that is very urgent today, namely welcoming others. I mention this here among you precisely because your country has a centuries-old tradition in this regard, a tradition that is still alive, as Sister Maria Perpetua reminded us. We heard of it in the other testimonies and in your repeated shouts of “*todos, todos, todos!*”, “everyone, everyone, everyone!”. Yes, the spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of welcoming, of openness to everyone; it does not admit any kind of exclusion (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 47). I encourage you, therefore, to be faithful to your legacy, to the riches that you have, and to continue to make your country a friendly home for those who knock at your door seeking help and hospitality.

To be welcoming is a requirement of charity but is foremost a matter of justice, as Saint John Paul II stated when he recalled the Christian roots of European culture. He encouraged the young people of Luxembourg to forge a path for “a Europe marked not only by goods and commodities, but by values, by men and women, by hearts”, a Europe where the Gospel is shared “through the words you proclaim and your loving actions” (*Address to Young People of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*, 16 May 1985, 4), both words and actions. I emphasize that we are in need of a Europe and a world in which the Gospel will be shared through the words you proclaim together with your loving actions.

This brings us to the second theme: mission. The Cardinal Archbishop just spoke about an “evolution of the Church in Luxembourg in a secularized society”. I liked the expression that the Church, within a secularized society needs to evolve,

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240926-lussemburgo-comunita-cattolica.html>

mature and grow. We cannot close ourselves off in sadness, resignation or resentment. On the contrary, we must accept the challenge while remaining faithful to the Church's perennial values. We should rediscover and esteem anew these values as paths for evangelization, going beyond an approach of simple pastoral care to one of missionary proclamation, and this requires courage. In order to do this, the Church must be ready to evolve. This can happen through the examples mentioned by Christine: sharing responsibilities and ministries, walking together as a missionary community and making synodality a lasting way to relate among its members.

Our young friends have shown us a beautiful image of the value of this type of growth through their performance of a scene from the musical *Laudato Si'*. Well done! They did very well. Thank you for this gift! Your work is the result of a communal effort that involved many people in the Archdiocese. It is also a prophetic sign for us in two ways. Firstly, your work reminds us of our responsibilities towards our "common home", and that we must care for it, rather than oppress it. At the same time, it also makes us consider that if we live out this mission together, it will become a magnificent piece of music we can sing in order to proclaim the beauty of the Gospel to all. It is also important for all of us to remember that what drives us to be missionaries is not the need to meet quotas or to proselytise, but rather our desire to make known to as many brothers and sisters as possible the joy of encountering Christ. And here I would like to recall a beautiful expression of Benedict XVI: "The Church does not grow by proselytism but by attraction".

Thus, as we overcome difficulties, the living power of the Holy Spirit is at work within us! Love moves us to proclaim the Gospel, which opens us to others. Accepting the challenge of this proclamation allows us to grow as a community, thus helping us to overcome the fear of embarking on new paths and to welcome gratefully each other's contribution. This is a beautiful, healthy, joyful dynamism that we would do well to cultivate in ourselves and among those around us.

And so we have reached the third word: joy. Diogo recalled his experience at World Youth Day and shared with us the happiness he experienced during the Vigil, as he waited for our encounter to take place, side by side with other youth from every people and nation. He also described his excitement when he woke up the next morning surrounded by so many friends. During the preparation for that event in Portugal he was full of enthusiasm, and now, a year later, he is filled with joy to be reunited with other young people here in Luxembourg. Do you see? Our faith is full of joy, it is a "dance", because we know that we are children of a God who is our friend, who wants us to be happy and united, who rejoices above all in our salvation (cf. *Lk 15:4-32*; Saint Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 34,3). On this issue, please remember that the Church is damaged by those sad,

dull, long-faced Christians. No, these are not really Christians. Please, have the joy of the Gospel, which makes us believe and grow so much.

MEETING WITH THE AUTHORITIES AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN BELGIUM*

Castle of Laeken, Brussels, 27 September 2024

We could describe Belgium as a bridge between the continent and the British Isles, between the Germanic and French-speaking regions, between southern and northern Europe. A bridge enabling concord to spread and disputes to abate. A bridge where all people, with their own languages, ways of thinking and beliefs can meet others and choose conversation, dialogue and sharing as the means of mutual interaction. A bridge where all can learn to make their own identity not an idol or barrier, but a welcoming place, from which to begin and then return; a place for promoting valuable personal exchanges, seeking together new social stability and building new agreements. Belgium is a bridge that promotes trade, connects and brings cultures into dialogue. An indispensable bridge, then, for rejecting war and building peace.

It is thus easy to see how great little Belgium really is! How Europe needs Belgium to remind it that its history comprises peoples and cultures, cathedrals and universities, achievements of human ingenuity, but also many wars and the will to dominate that sometimes led to colonialism and exploitation.

Europe needs Belgium in order to continue along the path of peace and of fraternity among its peoples. Indeed, Belgium is a reminder to all others that when nations disregard borders or breach treaties by employing the most varied and untenable excuses, and when they use weapons to replace actual law with the principle of “might is right”, then they open Pandora’s box, unleashing violent storms that batter the house, threatening to destroy it. At this moment in history, I think Belgium plays a very important role. It seems we are close to a world war.

Moreover, peace and harmony are never won once and for all. On the contrary, they are a duty and a mission – concord and peace is a task and a mission – one that needs to be undertaken unceasingly, with great care and patience. For when human beings forget the memory of the past and its valuable lessons, they run the dangerous risk of once again falling backwards, even after having moved on, forgetting the suffering and appalling costs paid by previous generations. Hu-

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240927-belgio-autorita.html>

man beings forget the past, but it is curious as there are other forces, both in society and in individuals, that make us fall repeatedly into the same mistakes.

In this regard, Belgium is more essential than ever for keeping alive the memory of the European continent. Indeed, it provides an irrefutable argument for developing a timely and continuous cultural, social and political movement that, at the same time, is both courageous and prudent. A movement that excludes from the future the idea and practice of war as a viable option with all its catastrophic consequences.

Furthermore, history is the often unheeded *magistra vitae* and Belgium's history calls Europe to return to its path, rediscover its true identity, and invest once again in the future by opening itself to life and hope by overcoming the demographic winter and the torments of war! These are the two calamities we face right now. We are seeing the nightmare of war, which can still turn into a world war. And the demographic winter; that is why we have to be pragmatic and have more children!

MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS IN BELGIUM*

Promotiezaal of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 27 September 2024

[...] Expanding boundaries and becoming an open space for humanity and for society is the great mission of a university.

In our own day, we find ourselves facing an ambivalent situation with its limited boundaries. On the one hand, we are immersed in a culture marked by a refusal to seek the truth. We have lost the ardent passion for searching. We would rather find comfort and refuge in the tenuous thought – the drama of the tenuous thought! – taking refuge in that all things are equal, everything is the same, everything is relative. On the other hand, when the question of truth arises in university contexts and elsewhere, we can often fall into a rationalist approach, considering as “true” only those things that can be measured, tested by experiment, and touched, as if life were uniquely restricted to what is material and visible. In both these cases, boundaries are limited.

With reference to the first type of limit, we find a kind of “intellectual weariness”, which consigns us to a permanent state of uncertainty, lacking all passion, as if the search for meaning were useless and reality were incomprehensible. This

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240927-belgio-docenti-universitari.html>

worldview is expressed by some of the characters in Franz Kafka's works, which describe the tragic and distressing human condition of the nineteenth century. In a dialogue between two characters in one of his stories, we find this affirmation: "I think she doesn't worry about truth because it's too tiring" (*Racconti*, Milano 1990, 38). Searching for the truth is indeed tiring since it obliges us to move out of ourselves, to take risks, to ask ourselves questions. Yet, due to an intellectual weariness, a superficial life is more appealing to us, one that does not deal with new challenges. There is likewise the danger of being attracted to an easy, effortless and comfortable "faith" that does not call anything into question.

Turning to the second kind of limited boundaries, today we run the risk of falling once again into a "soulless rationalism"; conditioned by a technocratic culture that leads us to it. When human beings are regarded as mere matter, when reality is constrained within the limits of what is visible, when reason is reduced to mathematical logic, when reason only comes from the "laboratory", then wonder is lost, and when it is lacking, one cannot think; wonder is the beginning of philosophy, it is the beginning of thought. In this way, we lose our ability to marvel, which urges us to look beyond, to raise our eyes heavenwards, to dig into the hidden truth that addresses the fundamental questions of: Why am I alive? What is the meaning of my life? What is the ultimate aim and purpose of this journey? Romano Guardini asked himself: "Why is it that man, despite so much progress, is unknown to himself and becomes ever more so? It is because he has lost the key to understanding his own essence. The law of our truth states that man understands himself only if he begins from above, from beyond himself, from God, for man's very existence comes from Him" (*Pregiera e verità*, Brescia 1973, 56).

[...] Indeed, what we need is a culture that *expands boundaries*, and avoids "sectarianism" – and thank you for not being sectarian – or exalting oneself above others. A culture immersed as good "leaven" within our world, contributing to the common good of humanity. This responsibility, this "great hope" is entrusted to you!

MEETING WITH BISHOPS, PRIESTS, DEACONS, CONSECRATED PERSONS, SEMINARIANS AND PASTORAL WORKERS*

Koekelberg Basilica of the Sacred Heart, Brussels, 28 September 2024

[...] Belgium is very much a crossroads, and you are a Church “on the move”. Indeed, for some time you have been trying to transform the presence of the parishes in this region, and to reinvigorate the formation of the laity. Above all, you strive to be a community that is close to the people, and that accompanies them, bearing witness through works of mercy.

Prompted by your questions, I would like to offer a brief reflection on three words: *evangelization, joy and mercy*.

The first path to follow is evangelization. The changes in our time and the crisis of faith we are experiencing in the West have impelled us to return to what is essential, namely the Gospel. The good news that Jesus brought to the world must once again be proclaimed to all and allowed to shine forth in all its beauty. This present crisis, like every crisis, is a time given in order to shock us, to make us question and to change. It is a valuable opportunity, referred to in biblical language as *kairòs*, a special occasion, as happened to Abraham, Moses and the prophets. Indeed, when we experience desolation, we must always ask ourselves what message the Lord wishes to convey to us. And what does this crisis show us? It demonstrates that we have moved from a Christianity located within a welcoming social framework to a “minority” Christianity, or better, a Christianity of witness. This requires the courage to undertake an ecclesial conversion for enabling those pastoral transformations that concern our habitual ways of doing things, and the language in which we express our faith, so that they are truly directed to evangelization (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 27).

Here, I would like to say to Helmut: priests also need this courage in order to be priests who are not just preserving or managing a past legacy, but pastors who are in love with Christ and who are attentive to responding to the often implicit demands of the Gospel as they walk with God’s holy people. In doing so, pastors walk sometimes ahead of their people, sometimes in their midst and sometimes behind them. I think of what Yaninka told us, that when we share the Gospel the Lord opens our hearts to encounter those who are different from us. It is good, indeed necessary, that there are different dreams and spiritualities among young people. This must be so, because there can be many personal or community paths,

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240928-belgio-religiosi.html>

yet leading us towards the same goal, to encounter the Lord. There is room for everyone – everyone! – in the Church and no one should be a mere copy of anyone else. Unity in the Church is not uniformity, but rather finding harmony within diversity! And to Arnaud I would say: the synodal process must involve returning to the Gospel. It is not about prioritizing “fashionable” reforms, but asking, how can we bring the Gospel to a society that is no longer listening or has distanced itself from the faith? Let us all ask ourselves this question.

The second path is joy. We are not talking here about passing joys, nor about indulging in patterns of escapism or consumerist amusement. We are talking about a greater joy that accompanies and sustains our lives, even in dark or painful moments. This is a gift that comes from above, from God. It is the joy of hearts kindled by the Gospel. It is knowing that we are not alone on our journey and that even in situations of poverty, sin, and affliction, God is near. He cares for us and will not allow death to have the last word. God is close. Long before he became pope, Joseph Ratzinger wrote that one particular rule of discernment is, “Where joy is lacking, and humour dies, not even the Holy Spirit remains [...] and vice versa: Joy is a sign of grace” (*The God of Jesus Christ*, Brescia 1978, 129). How beautiful! Thus, I would like to say to you: let your preaching, your celebrations, your service and apostolates radiate the joy of your hearts, for this will stir up questions and attract even those who are far away. The joy that comes from the heart, not a fake smile that is fleeting, rather the joy that comes from the heart. I would like to thank Sister Agnes and say to her: joy is the way. When fidelity seems difficult, we must show, as you said Agnese, that it is the “path to happiness”. Then, by focusing on where the road leads, we are more willing to begin the journey.

The third path is mercy. The Gospel, embraced and shared, received and given, leads us to joy because it makes us discover that God is the Father of mercy, who is moved to compassion for us, who lifts us up when we fall and who never withdraws his love from us. It should be fixed in our hearts that God never withdraws his love from us. “But is he Father even when I have done something serious?”. God never withdraws his love from you. This can sometimes seem “unjust”, when we are faced with the experience of evil. This is because we simply apply an earthly justice that says, “Whoever does wrong must pay”. Yet God’s justice is greater: those who have done wrong are called to right their wrongs. But they need God’s merciful love to heal their hearts. Do not forget, God forgives everything. God always forgives and it is through his mercy that God justifies us; he makes us righteous by giving us a new heart, a new life.

[...] I leave with you as a symbol of a Church that never closes its doors – please, never close the doors! – a Church that offers everyone an opening to the

infinite, and that knows how to look beyond. This is the Church that evangelizes, that lives the joy of the Gospel and practises mercy.

MEETING WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS*

Aula Magna of the Université Catholique de Louvain, 28 September 2024

[...] Among the issues you raised, I was struck by the one concerning the future and anxiety. It is easy to see how a violent and arrogant wickedness is destroying people and the environment. It seems to know no limits and is most brutally expressed by war – in a country that I will not name, the investments that provide the most profits come from the production of arms, it is terrible! – and it shows no signs of stopping; war is a brutal thing; but also by corruption and modern forms of slavery. War, corruption and new forms of slavery. Sometimes these evils even corrupt religion itself, turning it into an instrument of domination. Be careful! Yet this is blasphemy, whereby the union of men and women with God, who is saving Love, is turned into slavery, and even the name of Father, a revelation meant to heal, becomes an expression of arrogance. However, God is Father, not overlord; God is Son and Brother, not dictator; God is the Spirit of love, not of domination.

As Christians, we know that evil never has the last word. We must be firm on this: evil does not have the last word. We could even say that its days are numbered. Far from lessening our commitment, evil actually strengthens it, for our responsibility is hope. It is a responsibility that we must assume since hope never disappoints. This certainty wins over the pessimistic conscience, the style of Turandot... Hope never disappoints!

And now, three words: *gratitude, mission and fidelity.*

Our first attitude must be gratitude, because our home has been entrusted to us. We are not masters but guests and pilgrims on the earth. God is the first to care for it, just as he cares for us. In the words of Isaiah: God “did not create it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited!” (*Is 45:18*). And Psalm 8 is full of grateful wonder: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (*vv. 3-4*). The prayer from the heart that comes to mind is: Thanks be to our Father, for the starry sky and for our lives in this universe!

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240928-belgio-studenti-universitari.html>

The second attitude is mission. While we are in this world, we are meant to safeguard its beauty and cultivate it for the good of all, especially keeping in mind those who will come after us. This is the Church's "ecological programme". Yet no development plan will ever succeed as long as arrogance, violence and rivalry are on our consciences and in our society. We need to go to the source of the matter, which is the human heart. It is because of the human heart that ecological issues have become increasingly urgent: from the arrogant indifference rooted in the hearts of the powerful, who so often give preference to economic interests. Economic interests: money. I remember something that my grandmother always said: "Be careful since the devil enters through the pockets". Economic interests. As long as the situation remains like this, every appeal will be silenced or accepted only in a way that is convenient for the markets. This is the "spirituality" of the markets. As long as markets are given pride of place, then our common home will continue to suffer injustices. Yet, the beauty of the gift of creation summons us to a great responsibility, for we are guests, not despots. In this regard, dear students, I invite you to consider culture as the cultivation not just of ideas, but also of our world.

Herein lies the *challenge of integral development*, which requires *the third attitude: fidelity*. Fidelity to God and fidelity to every man and woman. Indeed, such development concerns all people in the physical, moral, cultural and socio-political aspects of their lives. Moreover, this type of development is contrary to all forms of oppression and rejection of others, and the Church denounces these abuses, committing herself above all to the conversion of each of her members, each one of us, to justice and to truth. In this sense, integral development calls us to holiness, to the vocation of a just and happy life.

And now, the choice to be made is between manipulating nature or cultivating it. The choice is to manipulate nature or cultivate nature. And we must begin with our own human nature, including questions of eugenics, cybernetic organisms and artificial intelligence. Yet the choice between manipulating or cultivating also concerns our interior lives.

Reflecting on human ecology brings us to an issue close to your hearts, as well as to mine and that of my predecessors: the role of women in the Church. I liked what you said. There is much involved here, including the questions of violence and injustice, as well as ideological prejudices. This is why we must go back to what is essential: who is woman and who is the Church? The Church is woman, female and not male. She is female, a wife. The Church is the People of God, not a multinational corporation. A woman within the People of God is a daughter, a sister, a mother, just as a man is a son, a brother, a father. These are all relationships, which express the fact that we have been made in the image of God, as men and women, together not separately! In the Church, men and women have been called from the beginning to love and to be loved. This is a vocation, and also a mission

that then gives rise to their roles both in society and in the Church (cf. Saint John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 1).

[...] As with every science, there is no single method, but there is a style. Each person can develop his or her own style. Indeed, study is always a gateway to knowledge of self and of others. Yet, there is also a common style that the whole university community can embrace. We study together with others, and should be grateful to those who have gone before us, and to both faculty and more advanced students studying alongside us in the classroom. Culture understood as taking care of oneself must, therefore, involve care for others. There is no conflict between students and professors. There is dialogue. It is more intense at times but there is dialogue and dialogue allows the university community to grow.

IN-FLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE*

Papal flight, 29 September 2024

Question from Michael Merten – Luxemburger Wort

Holy Father, I am Michael from *Luxemburger Wort*, a newspaper in Luxembourg. Luxembourg was the first country you visited. Many people remember your stay there, especially the people you surprised in the coffee shop. I would like to ask you about your impressions of Luxembourg. What are you taking back to Rome and what surprised you there?

Pope Francis' answer

Thank you, my visit to the coffee shop was just a fun thing. Next time I will visit a pizzeria. Luxembourg really impressed me as a well-balanced society, with well-considered laws, as well as a different culture. This impressed me a lot, because I was unfamiliar with it. Belgium, on the other hand, I knew better, because I have been there many times. But Luxembourg was a surprise because of its balance and hospitality. That is something that surprised me. I believe that perhaps the message Luxembourg can offer Europe is precisely this. Thank you.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240929-belgio-voloritorno.html>

**SECOND SESSION OF THE XVI GENERAL ORDINARY
ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
(2-27 OCTOBER 2024) -
1ST GENERAL CONGREGATION**

OPENING ADDRESS

Audience Hall, 2 October 2024

[...] Journeying together with everyone - everyone, everyone together, is a process in which the Church, submitting to the action of the Holy Spirit, and sensitive enough to capture the signs of the times (cf. *GS 4*), continually renews herself and perfects her sacramental nature, in order to be a credible witness of the mission to which she is called, to unite all peoples into the one people awaited at the end, when God Himself will ask us to be seated at the banquet prepared by Him (cf. *Is 25,6-10*).

HOMILY*

Saint Peter's Square, 2 October 2024

[...]. we re-open the Plenary Session of the Synod of Bishops. After listening to the Word of God, let us take three images as starting points for our consideration: *voice, refuge and a child*.

First, the voice. On the way to the Promised Land, God advises the people to listen to the “voice of the angel” whom he had sent (cf. *Ex 23:20-22*). It is an image that is relevant to us. As we walk down the path of this Synod, the Lord places in our hands the history, dreams and hopes of a great people. They are our sisters and brothers scattered throughout the world, inspired by the same faith, moved by the same desire for holiness. With them and for them, let us strive to understand the path we must follow in order to reach the destination the Lord desires for us. But how can we listen to the “voice of the angel”?

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2024/documents/20241002-omelia-angeli-custodi.html>

One way is to receive all the contributions collected during these three years with respect and attention, in prayer and in the light of the Word of God. These have been years of work, sharing and discussion, carried out with a constant effort to purify our minds and hearts. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we must listen to and understand these voices — that is, the ideas, the expectations, the proposals — so as to discern together the voice of God speaking to the Church (cf. Renato Corti, *Quale prete?, Appunti inediti*). As we have repeatedly stressed, ours is not a parliamentary assembly, but rather a place of listening in communion, where, as Saint Gregory the Great says, what someone has in himself or herself partially is possessed completely by another, and although some have particular gifts, everything belongs to everyone in the “charity of the Spirit” (cf. *Homilies on the Gospels*, XXXIV).

For this to happen, there is a condition: we must free ourselves from everything that prevents the “charity of the Spirit” from creating harmony in diversity in us and among us. Those who arrogantly claim to have the exclusive right to hear the voice of the Lord cannot hear it (cf. *Mk 9:38-39*). Every word is to be received with gratitude and simplicity and can become an echo of what God has given for the good of our brothers and sisters (cf. *Mt 10:7-8*). Let us be careful not to see our contributions as points to defend at all costs or agendas to be imposed. I hope each of us will offer our contribution as a gift to be shared, ready even to sacrifice our own point of view in order to give life to something new, all according to God’s plan. Otherwise we will end up locking ourselves into dialogues among the deaf, where participants seek to advance their own causes or agendas without listening to others and, above all, without listening to the voice of the Lord.

We do not have the solutions to the problems we face, but the Lord does (cf. *Jn 14:6*). Remember that you cannot lose focus in the desert. If you do not pay attention to the guide, if you think you are self-sufficient, you may die of hunger or thirst and take others with you. Let us therefore listen to the voice of God and of his angel so that we may go safely on our way, rising above our limitations and difficulties (cf. *Ps 23:4*).

This brings us to *the next image: refuge*, which can be symbolized by wings that protect us — “under his wings you will find refuge” (*Ps 91:4*). Wings are powerful instruments, able to lift a body off the ground through vigorous movement. Although they represent great strength, wings can also be lowered in order to gather, becoming a shield and a welcoming nest for the young birds who are in need of warmth and protection.

This is a symbol of what God does for us, and it is also a model for us to follow, especially as we gather together these days. Among us, dear brothers and sisters, there are many strong, well-prepared people, capable of rising to the heights with the intense movements of reflection and with brilliant insights. All this is a

great advantage to us. It stimulates, challenges and sometimes forces us to think more openly and to move forward more decisively. It also helps us to remain firm in our faith even in the face of challenges and difficulties. We must have open hearts, hearts in dialogue. A heart that is closed in personal convictions is not proper to the Spirit of the Lord. It is not of the Lord. It is a gift to open ourselves, and this gift must be combined, when necessary, with the ability to relax our muscles and bend down to offer each other a welcoming embrace and a place of refuge. That way we will be, as Saint Paul VI said, “a house [...] of brothers and sisters, a workshop of intense activity, a cenacle of ardent spirituality” (*Address to the Presidential Council of the C.E.I.*, 9 May 1974).

The more we realise that we are surrounded by friends who love, respect and appreciate us, friends who want to listen to what we have to say, the more we will feel free to express ourselves spontaneously and openly.

This approach is not just a technique for “facilitating” dialogue and group communication dynamics. In the Synod there are “facilitators”, but they are here to help us move forward better. Embracing, protecting and caring are in fact part of the very nature of the Church. Embracing, protecting and caring. The Church, by its very vocation, is a welcoming place of gathering, where “collegial charity demands perfect harmony, which leads to moral strength, spiritual beauty and ideal expression” (ibid.). Harmony: it is a very important word. It is not about majorities and minorities; that could be a first step. What is important, what is fundamental, is harmony, the harmony that only the Holy Spirit can achieve. The Holy Spirit is the master of harmony and is capable of creating one voice among so many different voices. Consider how the Spirit created harmony among differences on the morning of Pentecost. The Church needs “peaceful and open places” to be created first of all in our hearts, where each person feels welcomed, like an infant in a mother’s arms (cf. *Is 49:15; 66:13*) and as a child lifted up to a father’s cheek (cf. *Hos. 11:4; Ps 103:13*).

This brings us to the *third image: a child*. It is Jesus himself who, in the Gospel, “put a child in the midst of them”, showing him to the disciples, inviting them to convert and become small like him. They had asked him who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and he replied by encouraging them to become small like a child. But not only this, Jesus also adds that by welcoming a child in his name, we welcome him (cf. *Mt 18:1-5*).

This paradox is essential for us. Given the importance of a Synod, in a certain sense we must try to be “great” in spirit, in heart, in outlook, because the issues that we must deal with are “great” and delicate, and the situations are broad and universal. But it is precisely for this reason that we must not lose sight of the child, whom Jesus continues to place at the centre of our meetings and work tables. He does so to remind us that the only way to be worthy of the task entrusted to us is

to lower ourselves, to make ourselves small and to receive one another humbly. The greatest in the Church is the one who bends down the lowest.

Precisely by making himself small, God “shows us what true greatness, indeed, what it means to be God” (Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, 11 January 2009). It is not by chance that Jesus says that children’s angels “always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (*Mt 18:10*). In other words, they are like a “telescope” of the Father’s love.

Brothers and sisters, we begin anew our synodal path with an eye toward the world, since the Christian community is always at the service of humanity in order to announce the joy of the Gospel. In such a dramatic time in our history, when the winds of war and the flames of violence continue to devastate entire peoples and nations, there is need for this message.

FINAL GREETING

Audience Hall, 26 October 2024

[...] what we have lived through is a gift we cannot keep to ourselves. The energy that comes from this experience, which is reflected in the Document, gives us the courage to bear witness that it is possible to walk together with our differences without condemning each other.

We come from all parts of the world, from places marked by violence, poverty and indifference. Together, with the hope that does not disappoint, united in the love of God which has been poured into our hearts, we can not only dream of peace, but commit ourselves with all our might so that, even if we don’t say much about synodality, peace may be achieved through processes of listening, dialogue and reconciliation. The synodal Church for mission now needs the words we have shared to be backed up by deeds. And that is the path.

All of this is the Holy Spirit’s gift: *it is He who creates harmony, He is harmony*. Saint Basil has a beautiful theology on this: if you can, read his treatise on the Holy Spirit. He is harmony. Brothers and sisters, may harmony continue even after we leave this Aula and may the breath of the Risen One help us to share the gifts we have received.

And remember – more words from Madeleine Delbr el – that “there are places where the Spirit blows, but there is one Spirit who blows in every place”.

**VIDEO MESSAGE FOR THE OPENING OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025
OF THE “SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST” PONTIFICAL THEOLOGICAL FACULTY
OF SICILY IN PALERMO**

Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 16 October 2024

Your Faculty, born with a strong ecclesiological vocation, is called from within history and to listen to the intuition of faith that the people of God possess, to be active in facing those challenges that the Mediterranean poses to theology: ecumenical dialogue with the East, interreligious dialogue with Islam and Judaism, the defence of human dignity in the *Mare nostrum*, often rendered *monstrum* by the logic of death, the cultural and social force of popular religiosity, or “popular piety”, as Saint Paul VI said, the resource of literature for the cultural redemption of the people, and above all, the challenges of liberation that come from the cry of the victims of the Mafia.

[...] And this, I like to say, is the vocation of your island. However, it is also the place where cultures, histories, and different faces meet in harmony, and commit theology to fostering dialogue with the sister Churches of the East that also overlook the Mediterranean. The route of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, difficult though it may be, is that of re-proposing and supporting, through experiences of encounter, experiences also of exchange and collaboration, listening jointly to the Holy Spirit. It is the legacy of many martyrs of dialogue in the Mediterranean. Therefore, you are entrusted with the mission of establishing yourselves as a laboratory of a theology of ecumenical dialogue and a theology of religions, leading to a theology of interreligious dialogue. Always the word dialogue, dialogue, openness.

Finally, in this context the exchange between theology and literature appears fruitful; it is a note that has characterized the research of your Theological Faculty in these years, especially in the choice to acknowledge that intuition of faith that belongs to the experience of the people. Literature often narrates this, and enables a reading of the Sicilian and Mediterranean reality, helping you all to rediscover your identity in dialogue and making you capable of removing your sandals “before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Ex 3:5*)” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 169). On the other hand, how could one understand multifaceted Sicilian thought without Pirandello, Verga, Sciascia, and without the existential themes on which they wrote memorable pages?

Dear brothers and sisters, the Mediterranean needs a living theology, one that cultivates its contextual dimension to the full, becoming an appeal to all. Cultivate this theology compromised with history, just as God in the flesh of the Son

compromised with our tears and hopes. Cultivate a theology that, from the height of the cross and on its knees before its neighbour, uses humble, sober and radical words, to help everyone arrive at compassion; and words that teach us to make networks of salvation and love, to generate a new history, rooted in the history of the people.

**MESSAGE FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE “PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES AWARD
2023” AT THE *PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LATIN****

From the Vatican, 23 October 2024

Latin is a treasure trove of knowledge and thought, a key to the classical texts that forged our world. It represents the roots of western civilization and, in many ways, our very identity. It is a language that embraces philosophy, science, art and politics, thus demonstrating its intrinsic value as a tool for reflection and dialogue, more necessary than ever in a world as fragmented as ours. In this regard, the prizewinners offer a fresh and contemporary view of how this ancient language can still speak to us and stimulate our reflection today. Their research not only investigates the thought of the great masters of the past, but integrates their knowledge in a modern context, bringing it closer to the challenges of our time. The entrants’ work invites us to explore the nexus between scientific and political knowledge, under the aegis of a language with a history stretching back thousands of years.

The theme *De rerum natura* makes us think of the wonders of creation. At a time when we are increasingly aware of the fragility of the environment, reflection on the natural world becomes crucial. Science offers us tools to understand the laws of nature, to explore the mystery of life and to face ecological challenges. However, it is only through ethical, cultural and spiritual interpretation that we can truly grasp the deeper meaning of the cosmos that surrounds us and of which we are a part.

The vision of nature, in its entirety, as a gift of God, invites us to reflect on our responsibility towards the common home. There can and must be dialogue between science and faith: indeed, they are both called to guide our understanding of the world. In particular, the prize you have awarded reminds us that science

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20241023-messaggio-premio-accademie.html>

cannot be reduced to a mere accumulation of data, but must help to grasp the complexity and the beauty of creation.

**TO THE XVI GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE MISSIONARIES OF SAINT CHARLES
(SCALABRINIANS)***

Consistory Hall, 28 October 2024

Migrants teach us to hope. I myself am the son of migrants, and at home we always experienced the sense of going to contribute to the Americas, in order to progress and move forwards. Migrants leave their homes behind in the hope of “finding their daily bread elsewhere” – as Saint John Baptist Scalabrini used to say. Even when everything seems to work against them, and they encounter only closed doors and rejection, they do not despair. Their determination, often inspired by their love for the families they have left behind, can teach us a great deal. As “migrants among migrants”, which is what your Founder wanted you to be, you have much to learn from them as you share in their journey. In this way, through interaction and dialogue, and by welcoming Christ present in them, you will grow in solidarity with one another, putting your trust “in God and in God alone”. Do not forget the Old Testament: the widow, the orphan and the stranger are God’s privileged ones. The dream of a new future that drives people to migrate reflects a yearning for salvation that is present in all people, whatever their race or social condition. Indeed, “itinerancy”, despite the sufferings it entails, can become a precious school of faith and humanity, both for those who provide assistance and those who receive it, provided that it is properly understood and experienced (cf. *Message for the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 27 May 2019). Nor should we forget that the history of salvation is itself a history of migrants, of peoples on the move.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/october/documents/20241028-scalabriniani.html>

TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE DICASTERY FOR COMMUNICATION*

Clementine Hall, 31 October 2024

I dream of a communication from heart to heart, letting ourselves be touched by what is human, letting ourselves be wounded by the dramas that so many of our brothers and sisters experience. This is why I invite you to go out more, to dare more, to risk more, not to spread your ideas, but to recount reality with honesty and passion. I dream of a communication that is able to go beyond slogans, and to keep the spotlight on the poor, the last, migrants, and victims of war. A communication that fosters inclusion, dialogue, the quest for peace. How urgent it is to give space to workers for peace! Do not tire of recounting their testimonies, in every part of the world.

I dream of a communication that teaches us to give up a little of ourselves to make space for others; an impassioned, curious and competent communication, that knows how to immerse itself in reality in order to be able to tell it. It does us good to listen to stories with an evangelical flavour, which today, as two thousand years ago, tell us about God as Jesus, his Son, revealed him to the world.

Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid of getting involved, of changing, of learning new languages or travelling new roads, of inhabiting the digital environment. Always do so without letting yourselves be absorbed by the tools you use, without making encounters online a “surrogate” for true, real human relations, from person to person. The Gospel is the story of encounters, actions, looks, conversations on the street and at the table. I dream of a communication that is able to bear witness today to the beauty of the encounters with the Samaritan, with Nicodemus, with the adulteress, with blind Bartimaeus... as I wrote in the new Encyclical *Dilexit nos*, Jesus was “attentive... to individuals and above all to their problems and needs” (40). We communicators are called to do likewise, because by encountering love, the love of Jesus, “we become capable of forging bonds of fraternity, of recognizing the dignity of each human being, and of working together to care for our common home” (*DN*, 217).

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/october/documents/20241031-dicastero-comunicazione.html>

INCONTRO CON LA COMUNITÀ ACCADEMICA DELLA PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ GREGORIANA*

Piazza della Pilotta, Roma, 5 novembre 2024

[...] In questa Università si dovrebbero generare sapienze che non possono nascere da idee astratte concepite solo a tavolino ma che guardino e sentano i travagli della storia concreta, che abbiano la loro scaturigine nel contatto con la vita dei popoli e con i simboli delle culture, nell'ascolto delle domande nascoste e del grido che si leva dalla carne sofferente dei poveri.

E bisogna toccarla questa carne, avere il coraggio di camminare nel fango e di sporcarsi le mani. L'Università, se vuole essere un luogo e uno strumento della missione della Chiesa, deve elaborare saperi generati da Dio, provati nel dialogo con l'umanità, abbandonando l'approccio del "noi e gli altri". Per tanti secoli le scienze sacre hanno guardato tutti dall'alto in basso. In questo modo abbiamo fatto parecchi errori! Ora è tempo di essere tutti umili, di riconoscere di non sapere, di aver bisogno degli altri, specie di chi non pensa come me. Questo è un mondo complesso e la ricerca chiede l'apporto di tutti. Nessuno può pretendere di bastare da solo, sia che si tratti di persone con competenze qualificate che di visione del mondo. Nessun pensiero da solo può essere la perfetta risposta a problemi che si affrontano a un livello diverso. Meno cattedre, più tavole senza gerarchie, uno di fianco all'altro, tutti mendicanti di conoscenza, toccando le ferite della storia. Secondo questo stile il Vangelo potrà convertire il cuore e rispondere alle domande della vita.

E per fare questo, sorelle e fratelli, è necessario trasformare lo spazio accademico in una casa del cuore. La cura delle relazioni ha bisogno del cuore che dialoga. Il cuore unisce i frammenti e con il cuore degli altri si costruisce un ponte dove incontrarsi. Il cuore è necessario all'Università che è luogo di ricerca per una cultura dell'incontro e non dello scarto. È un luogo di dialogo tra il passato e il presente, tra la tradizione e la vita, tra la storia e le storie. Vorrei ricordare la scena dell'Iliade in cui Ettore prima di affrontare Achille fa visita alla moglie Andromaca e al figlio Astianatte. Vedendolo in armatura ed elmo Astianatte si spaventa e comincia a gridare. Ettore si toglie l'elmo e lo lascia a terra, prende in braccio il figlio e lo solleva fino alla sua altezza. Solo allora gli parla. In questa bella scena possiamo vedere i passi che precedono il dialogo: deporre le armi, mettere l'altro sullo stesso piano per guardarlo negli occhi. Disarmarsi, disarmare i pensieri, disarmare le parole, disarmare gli sguardi e poi essere alla stessa altezza per guardarsi

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241105-gregoriana.html>

negli occhi. Non c'è un dialogo dall'alto in basso, non c'è. Solo così l'insegnamento diventa un atto di misericordia, la cui caratteristica Shakespeare descrive in modo così bello: «La natura della misericordia è di non essere forzata essa si spande come la dolce pioggia del cielo e produce una doppia felicità la felicità di quello che dà e di colui che riceve»: sia l'insegnante, sia la studentessa, sia lo studente. Ci si aspetta in questo modo che entrambi possano imparare. E questo dialogo portato nella relazione con la tradizione e la storia dovrà essere compassionevole verso il presente - quante ferite attendono cura! - ma rispettoso del passato, compassionevole nell'oggi e rispettoso dello "ieri". C'è anche un'altra immagine, molto bella, anch'essa tratta dalla guerra di Troia, questa volta raccontata dall'Eneide. La guerra ha mostrato il suo stile tragico ed Enea mentre tutto sembra perduto fa due cose. Per salvarlo dall'incendio di Troia si prende sulle spalle il padre Anchise, anziano paralizzato, che aveva cercato di convincere il figlio a lasciarlo senza caricarsi il suo peso che avrebbe rallentato la fuga. La seconda cosa è proteggere il figlio Ascanio afferrato alla sua mano destra. E così va avanti, quel famoso "*sublato patre montem petivi*" (il verso dell'Eneide esatto è: «*Cessi, et sublato montem genitore petivi*» cioè: «Mi rassegnai e, sollevato il padre, mi diressi sui monti»). Così dobbiamo andare avanti.

Non so quanti di voi hanno visto la statua del Bernini alla Galleria Borghese che riprende questa scena. Andate a vederla, lì troverete un racconto scolpito nel marmo, ma scoprirete anche la vostra missione: portare sulle vostre spalle la storia di fede, di sapienza, di sofferenza, sofferenza di tutti i tempi. Camminare nel presente in fiamme che ha bisogno del vostro aiuto e tenendo per mano il futuro: insieme, passato, presente e futuro.

[...] L'Università è un luogo di dialogo. Proviamo a immaginare due studenti che arrivano con un libro ciascuno, che poi si scambiano. Ciascuno tornerà a casa con un solo libro, ma se questi studenti si scambiano una riflessione o un'idea quando se ne vanno, ognuno porterà a casa una riflessione o un'idea in più. Ma non è solo la quantità: ognuno sarà in debito con l'altro, ognuno sarà parte dell'altro.

**TO HIS HOLINESS MAR AWA III, CATHOLICOS PATRIARCH
OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST, AND TO THE JOINT COMMISSION
FOR THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE***

Saturday, 9 November 2024

The Common Christological Declaration announced the establishment of a *Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue* between our Churches, which has borne remarkable fruit, also at the pastoral level. I would like to mention in particular the 2001 agreement on the Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari, which permitted for our respective faithful a certain *communicatio in sacris* in particular circumstances, and, in 2017, a Common Statement on “sacramental life”. More recently, two years ago, a document on *The Images of the Church in the Syriac and Latin Patristic Traditions* laid the foundation for a common understanding of the Church’s constitution.

Today, then, I have an opportunity to thank all of you, the theologian members of the Joint Commission, for your hard work. Indeed, without your work these doctrinal and pastoral agreements would not have been possible. I look forward to the publication of a commemorative volume containing the various documents marking the stages of our journey towards full communion, with a joint preface by Your Holiness and myself. Theological dialogue is indispensable in our journey towards unity, since the unity we yearn for is unity in faith, while the dialogue of truth must never be separated from the dialogue of charity and the dialogue of life. In this way, it is a complete and human dialogue.

**TO THE UNISERVITATE GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM,
“SERVICE-LEARNING AND THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON EDUCATION”****

Clementine Hall, 9 November 2024

UNISERVITATE responds in a consistent way to the intentions of the Global Compact on Education by cultivating educational processes that involve everyone. I have often repeated an African proverb that states it takes an entire village to educate a child. Let us make every effort, then, to build such an “educational

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241109-patriarca-chiesa-assira.html>

** <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241109-simposio.html>

village”, where we can work together to promote positive and culturally fruitful human relationships.

Through these close relationships, an educational covenant can certainly arise among all those who work for the personal growth of individuals in its various scientific, political, artistic, athletic and other aspects. Education is not a process that ends once we leave the classroom or library; it continues throughout life, in our daily encounters with others and on the paths we take. Listening to each other, reflecting on dialogue: this is the way of education.

The covenant that I invite you to cultivate should produce fruits of peace, justice and mutual acceptance among all peoples and expand its positive effects in ever closer forms of cooperation. This cooperation can foster interreligious dialogue and care for our common home. We all know that the task is not easy, but it is definitely exciting! Educating is an adventure, a great adventure.

In the face of this challenge, Catholic schools of every kind and level are called courageously to make whatever changes are necessary, letting their activities be inspired by the teaching of Jesus, our common Teacher. To promote consistency between the various initiatives, I would encourage you to consider in particular two principles drawn from the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Realities are more important than ideas” (Nos. 231-233) and always “The whole is greater than the part” (Nos. 234-237).

First, education programmes should bring students into contact with the realities around them, so that, starting from experience, they learn to change the world not for their own benefit, but in a spirit of service. Contact with reality in order not to get lost in ideas.

Second, Catholic education should promote a “culture of curiosity”. Have you heard of this? A wise man once said that a culture of curiosity is not the same as the culture of gossip, no, they have nothing to do with each other. Culture of curiosity values the art of asking questions. This is what children teach us in the period known as “why”: “Dad, why? Mom, why?”. I am reminded of something that deeply touched me. They took me for an operation to remove my tonsils. At that time, there was no anaesthesia, and it was done in a very practical way: the nurse took you and held you down so that you could not move. They used a device to keep your mouth open, and with two forceps, pop, and that was that. Afterwards, they would give you an ice cream to make the blood coagulate. On the way out, my dad called a taxi and we went home and in the end he paid for the taxi. The next day, when I could talk, I said to him, “Dad, why did you pay?” “Because...”, and he explained what the taxi was. “But Dad, are not all the cars in the city yours?” “No!” It was a big disappointment, because my father did not own all the cars. The children’s “why” sometimes stems from disappointment or from curiosity. We listen to children’s questions, and we learn to ask them. This helps us

a lot. I call this a culture of curiosity. Children are curious, in the good sense of the word. The art of asking questions.

Let us support young people in this exploration of themselves and the larger world, without reducing knowledge to mental skills, but complementing those skills with manual dexterity and the generosity born of a passionate heart. Education is not only through the mind, but through the heart and the hands. We must learn to think what we feel and do, to feel what we do and think, to do what we feel and think. This is education: it is a triple language.

Here is a good way to succeed in this urgent task. “In this ‘liquid’ world of ours, we need to start speaking once more about the heart” (Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos*, 9), since “it is only by starting from the heart that our communities will succeed in uniting and reconciling differing minds and wills, so that the Spirit can guide us in unity as brothers and sisters” (*ibid.*, 28). Perhaps the greatest enemies in the journey of maturation are ideologies. Ideologies do not make us grow. Every type of ideology is the enemy of maturation.

TO THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE MALANKARA MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH*

Monday, 11 November 2024

Providence has permitted new relations to develop between our Churches. I remember in particular when, in November 2022, I had the joy of receiving you, dear Metropolitan Barnabas. These contacts of ours led to the start of an official dialogue: the first meeting took place last December in Kerala and the next is to take place in a few weeks. I rejoice at the beginning of this dialogue, which I entrust to the Holy Spirit and which I hope will hasten the day when we will be able to share the same Eucharist, in fulfilment of the Lord’s prophecy: “They shall come from east and west and sit at table” (cf. *Mt 8:11*).

In this journey of dialogue, I would like to highlight two perspectives: *synodality and mission*. As for *synodality*, it is significant that you wished to make this visit as the Holy Synod, since your Church is by tradition essentially synodal. As you may know, a few days ago the Catholic Church concluded a Synod on synodality, which was also attended by fraternal Delegates from other Christian traditions who enriched our reflections. One of the convictions expressed is that synodality is inseparable from ecumenism, for both are based on the one Baptism

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241111-chiesa-siro-malankarese.html>

we have received and on the *sensus fidei* in which all Christians share by virtue of Baptism itself. The *Final Document* of that Assembly states that we must not only “pay greater attention to the synodal practices of our ecumenical partners, both in the East and in the West”, but also “imagine ecumenical synodal practices, up to and including forms of consultation and discernment on matters of shared and urgent concern” (No. 138). Your Church, I am sure, can help us on this journey of ecumenical synodality. I am reminded of what the great Zizioulas said about Christian unity. He was a great man, a man of God. He said: “I know the date when there will be full unity between the Churches”. What is the date? “The day after the Last Judgement”. He added: “But, in the meantime we must walk together, pray together and work together”. All together.

MESSAGE TO THE FIRST SYNODAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCHES IN ITALY
(St. Paul Outside the Walls, November 15-17, 2024)

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 November 2024

During these days you have been able to discuss the Guidelines, which already offer an overview of the issues that have emerged over the past three years. Therefore, I would like to remind you too that “‘journeying together’ with everyone, everyone, is a process in which the Church, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to in reading the signs of the times (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4), continually renews herself and perfects her sacramentality. In this way, she strives to be a credible witness to the mission to which she has been called, to gather all the peoples of the earth into one, when at last God himself will give us a seat at the banquet he has prepared (cf. *Is 25:6-10*)” (*Beginning of the Second Session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 2 October 2024).

In the meeting we had in May last year, I entrusted you with three directions: to continue walking, to be Church together and to be an open Church. These indications are not limited to one of the three phases - narrative, sapiential, prophetic - of your journey, but concern the life of the Church in Italy in the current context. And this is confirmed by the discernment carried out in this last stretch of the road. In fact, the syntheses collected by the local Churches bear witness to a vivacity that is expressed in the journey, in the cultivation of the whole and in the style of openness. They are stories in which the Holy Spirit has acted, pointing out the priority dimensions to set certain processes in motion, to make courageous choices, to return to proclaiming the prophecy of the Gospel, to be missionary disciples. Do not be afraid to raise your sails to the wind of the Spirit! Let us not forget that in the very Basilica where you are standing, on 25 January 1959 Saint

John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council. And later he explained: “This is what is now required of the Church: to put the perennial, life-giving, divine energy of the Gospel into the veins of what is now the human community” (Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, 3).

Today too, like then, we are sent to bring the good news with joy! With this knowledge, I encourage you to travel the third stretch, dedicated to prophecy. The prophets live in time, reading it through the eyes of faith, enlightened by the Word of God. It is therefore a question of translating what has been gathered over these years into evangelical choices and decisions. And this is done in docility to the Spirit. “

He is the agent of the synodal process! ... It is He who opens up individuals and communities to listening; it is He who makes dialogue authentic and fruitful; it is He who enlightens discernment; it is He who guides choices and decisions. And it is He, above all, who creates harmony, communion in the Church” (*Address to diocesan representatives of the Italian synod path*, 25 May 2023).

**MESSAGE AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP29)***
(Baku, Azerbaijan, 11-22 November 2024)

The scientific data available to us do not allow any further delay and make it clear that the preservation of creation is one of the most urgent issues of our time. We have also to recognize that it is closely interrelated with the preservation of peace.

COP29 takes in a context conditioned by growing disillusionment with multilateral institutions and dangerous tendencies to build walls. Selfishness – individual, national and of power groups – feeds a climate of mistrust and division that does not respond to the needs of an interdependent world in which we should act and live as members of one family inhabiting the same interconnected global village.

«As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers» (Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, 29 June 2009, n. 19). Economic development has not reduced inequality. On the contrary, it has favoured the prioritization of profit and special interests at the expense of

* Message delivered by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20241113-messaggio-baku.html>,

the protection of the weakest, and has contributed to the progressive worsening of environmental problems.

In order to reverse the trend and create a culture of respect for life and of the dignity of human person it is necessary to understand that the harmful consequences of lifestyles affect everyone and to shape the future together, «to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries» (Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, n. 164).

May the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” (*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, Art. 3.1 and Art. 4.1; *Paris Agreement*, Art. 2.2.) guide and inspire the work of these weeks. Let historical and present responsibilities become concrete and forward-looking commitments for the future, so that a *New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance*, among the most urgent of this Conference, can emerge from these weeks of work.

Efforts should be made to find solutions that do not further undermine the development and adaptive capacity of many countries that are already burdened with crippling economic debt. When discussing climate finance, it is important to remember that ecological debt and foreign debt are two sides of the same coin, mortgaging the future.

In this perspective, I would like to reiterate an Appeal that Pope Francis made in view of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025, asking the more affluent nations «that they acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to *forgive the debts* of countries that will never be able to repay them. More than a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice. It is made all the more serious today by a new form of injustice which we increasingly recognize, namely, that “a true ‘ecological debt’ exists, particularly between the global North and South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time”» (*Laudato si'*, n. 51).

[...] I reiterate the dedication and support of the Holy See in this endeavor, especially in the field of integral ecology education and in raising awareness of the environmental as «a human and social problem on any number of levels» (*Laudate Deum*, n. 58), which requires above all a clear commitment, in which the responsibility, the acquisition of knowledge and the participation of each person are fundamental.

We cannot “pass by and look the other way” (*Fratelli tutti*, n. 75). Indifference is an accomplice to injustice. I appeal, therefore, that, with the common good in mind, we can unmask the mechanisms of self-justification that so often paralyze us: what can I do? How can I contribute?

There is no time for indifference today. We cannot wash our hands of it,

with distance, with carelessness, with disinterest. This is the real challenge of our century.

For an ambitious agreement, for every initiative and process aimed at truly inclusive development, I assure you of my support and that of the Holy Father in order to render an effective service to humanity, so that we can all take responsibility for safeguarding not only our own future, but that of all.

TO THE ITALIAN NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL*

Consistory Hall, 16 November 2024

[...] In dialogue with the institutions, you are the consultative body called upon to represent the world of youth at local, national and European level. And to this end, you must promote the active participation of young people by “networking” among the many associations inspired by values such as solidarity and inclusion. By “networking”, but also by making noise. This is very important. In this task - of “networking” and “making noise” - I invite you to be a voice for everyone, especially for those who have no voice. And today there are so many people who have no voice, so many who are excluded, not only socially, because of the problems of poverty, lack of education, the tyranny of drugs... but also of those who do not know how to dream. Network in order to dream, and do not lose this ability. Dream.

As we know – also from the news in these days – the challenges you face are many: the dignity of work, the family, education, civic engagement, care for creation and new technologies. The increase in acts of violence and self-harm, up to the most extreme gesture of taking one’s own life, are signs of a worrying and complex malaise. You know that, in the world, youth suicides are not all published, they are hidden. It is a change of era, a metamorphosis not only cultural but also anthropological. This is why an educational path involving everyone is fundamental. I can say that we need a ‘village of education’ where, in diversity, we share a commitment to generate a network of human and open relationships. What is needed is a pact, an alliance, between those who wish to put the person at the centre and, at the same time, are willing to invest new energy in the training of those who will serve the community.

[...] Faced with the challenges and the difficulties you may encounter in your

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241116-delegazione-giovani.html>

work, do not fear! Do not be afraid to go through conflicts too. Conflicts make us grow. But do not forget that conflict is like a labyrinth: you cannot get out of the labyrinth alone, you get out in the company of someone else who helps you. First. And from the labyrinth you get out from above. Let others help you. And always look up so that life is not a labyrinthine ride that kills youth. To grow old in a labyrinth is to grow old in superficial values. It is sad to see a man or a woman, young, living (their) life in superficiality. It is very sad... It is necessary in life also to go through conflicts. You need the patience to transform them into the ability to listen, to acknowledge the other, to grow together. Trying to overcome conflicts is a sign that we have aimed higher, higher than our self-interest, to get out of the quicksand of social enmity. Go ahead in your service: seek, safeguard and bring the voice and hope of young Italians to institutional venues to participate together for the common good.

**TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY
“CONSERVATA ET PERLECTA ALIIS TRADERE. LIBRARIES IN DIALOGUE”***

Clementine Hall, 16 November 2024

[...] this Meeting, “*Conservata et perlecta aliis tradere, Libraries in Dialogue*”, is a sign of the Vatican Library’s openness to the world. That is exactly what I asked of Archbishop Zani when I appointed him. I told him, “Go, open it up!” I greet the Librarians and the benefactors who contribute generously to the needs of this Institution. With deep gratitude, I also welcome the representatives of twenty-three prestigious Libraries worldwide who have taken part in the Meeting. The Vatican Library seek to dialogue with related institutions on a number of key issues, and has initiated study groups that I trust will continue and bear fruit for your mutual enrichment.

Such practical dialogue on well-defined topics will surely contribute to enhancing the educational and cultural outreach of your Libraries in these changing times. Your institutions are called to pass on the legacy of the past in ways meaningful to new generations immersed in a liquid culture and thus in need of solid, formative, welcoming and inclusive environments in which they can create new syntheses capable of insight into the present and hope for the future. Yours is indeed an exciting mission.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241116-bav.html>

**TO THE COLLOQUIUM: “THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE,
PARTICULARLY IN THE FAMILY: A CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIANS
AND MUSLIMS” PROMOTED BY THE DICASTERY
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE***

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall, 20 November 2024

I am pleased to meet you during this, your twelfth Colloquium. As we all know, this long-standing form of cooperation has been most gratifying for all of us, since it fosters a culture of dialogue, something that I consider of critical importance and which I follow closely.

As you know, I plan to elevate the Archbishop of Tehran-Ispahan – a great friar – to the College of Cardinals. This decision expresses my closeness and concern for the Church in Iran, and in turn honours the entire country.

The life of the Catholic Church in Iran, a “little flock”, is very close to my heart. The Church is not against the government; to say otherwise is a lie. I am aware of its situation and the challenges it faces as it perseveres in bearing witness to Christ and contributing, quietly but significantly, to the good of society as a whole, while rejecting all religious, ethnic or political discrimination.

I am particularly appreciative of the theme you have chosen for this Colloquium: “The Education of Young People, particularly in the Family: A Challenge for Christians and Muslims”. What a beautiful topic! The family, the cradle of life, is the primordial place of education. It is in the family that we take our first steps and learn to listen to others, to acknowledge and respect them, to help them and to live with one another in harmony. A common element of our different religious traditions is the contribution made by the elderly to the education of the young. This is something I hold very close to my heart; grandparents, by their wisdom, are a crucial aid in the religious education of their grandchildren, and serve as a vital link in family relationships over the generations (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 262). Honouring our grandparents is so important. Their religiosity, communicated informally by the witness of their lives, is invaluable for the growth of young people. I will never forget that my own grandmother was the one who taught me to pray.

One educational challenge common to both Christians and Muslims is posed by the growing, complex reality of marriages involving disparity of cult. It is easy to

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241120-dicastero-dialogo-interreligioso.html>

see that such family settings represent a privileged place for interreligious dialogue (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 248). And that is what we must pursue.

The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has a direct impact on the family. We know what great challenges the family faces in a world that is changing rapidly and not always in the right direction. Consequently, in order to fulfil better its educational mission, the family needs the full support of everyone, including the state, the school, its own religious community and other institutions.

Some of the many tasks of the family are those of educating and “being at home” beyond the walls of its own house. Dialogue between believers of different religions does just that; it enables us to step out of our own familiar patterns of thinking and acting, and to be open to encounter within the greater human family. But for dialogue to be fruitful, it must meet several conditions: it must be open, it must be sincere, it must be respectful, it must be friendly and it must be concrete. This is what makes dialogue successful. This approach will make us credible in the eyes of our own community and before our interlocutors and their communities, while constantly reminding us that we are accountable to God for all that we think, for all that we say and for all that we do.

Finally, the education of the younger generation takes place through fraternal cooperation in the search for God. In this quest, we must never tire of speaking and working for the dignity and rights of every person, every community and every people. We must always defend their rights. Indeed, freedom of conscience and religion is the cornerstone of the entire edifice of human rights. Nor is freedom of religion limited to the expression of worship; it also entails complete freedom in the matter of one’s own beliefs and religious practice (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3-4).

Brothers and sisters, our world is divided by hatred, hostility, wars and the threat of a nuclear conflict. We can read the latest threat in today’s newspapers. This situation prompts us, as believers in the God of Peace, to pray and work for dialogue, reconciliation, peace, security and the integral development of all humanity. We profess our faith in the all-powerful God of love. The commitment to peace that we can demonstrate together will make us credible in the eyes of the world and above all to future generations.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for coming! May the Most High keep and bless us, our communities and the whole world, and accompany you at every step of your journey of dialogue.

Let us now take a brief moment in silence as we pray asking God to bless us all. Let us be silent.

TO THE PUBLISHING HOUSE “LA SCUOLA”*

Hall of Popes, 21 November 2024

[...] an open attitude, also a dialogue-based attitude towards everyone: in fact, school is first and foremost a place where one learns to open one’s mind and heart to the world. “Education does not consist of filling the head with ideas, but ... in accompanying and encouraging students on the path of human growth and spiritual growth, showing them how friendship with the Risen Jesus expands the heart and makes life more humane”. Educating is helping to think well, to feel well, and to do good. The three languages: the language of the heart – feeling well – the language of the head – thinking well – and the language of the hands – doing good. But all of them in harmony: to do what one feels and thinks; to feel what one thinks and does; to think what one feels and does. These three languages, united, all of them. “This vision is fully relevant today, when we feel the need for an “educational pact” capable of uniting families, schools and society as a whole” (*Catechesis*, 28 June 2023). And this is the key, isn’t it? The unity of schools with families. I think that this has diminished recently... But I remember, in our time, there was great unity and there was also collaboration. Once I swore at the teacher – I was nine years old. The teacher, a lady I was very fond of – I visited her until she died – called my mother. They spoke, and then they called me. My mother said to me, “Apologize to the teacher”. I apologized. And I returned to the classroom happy that it had been so easy, but it was not the case. The second act of the opera was when I arrived home, and they gave me the second act. There was unity, wasn’t there? Today it is very often upturned, isn’t it? The parents go to complain because the teacher did this or that to the child... that is terrible. But looking back at these memories is good for us.

The activities you are carrying out, preparing text books to help students to think, to expand the mind and the heart to the various forms of knowledge, to open the spirit to the history that has engendered us, to understand also the social value of religion, attest to the fact that you are proceeding in the direction taken by the founding members. The challenges they faced with courage and determination are to a large extent similar to those you are currently encountering. Epoch change, far from being a cause for lament and fear, is a new opportunity: the future belongs to the new generations [,,] and they will be able to build it if the teachers you train

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241121-editrice-lascuola.html>

know how to transmit confidence and boldness to them, if the texts you prepare will succeed in developing a thirst for knowledge and wisdom.

TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE DICASTERY FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Clementine Hall, 21 November 2024

Our meeting takes place as you celebrate the first Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Culture and Education. I take this opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the risk involved in combining the spheres of *culture* and *education*. When, in the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, I decided to amalgamate the offices of the Holy See concerned respectively with education and with culture, it was not so much for the sake of achieving greater economic efficiency as much as to exploit the potential for dialogue, interaction and innovation in a way that could enhance the effectiveness of both.

Our world does not need automatons that simply repeat what has already been said and done; it needs new choreographers, new interpreters of our rich human resources, new social poets. Educational models that aim merely to produce “results” are useless in the absence of a cultural vision capable of forming persons prepared to help the world change gears by eliminating inequality, endemic poverty and exclusion. The pathologies of today’s world must not be regarded with resignation, much less complacency, as being inevitable. Schools, universities and cultural centres should instead be places that teach how to yearn, desire and dream, since, as the *Second Letter of Peter* reminds us, “we await new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (3:13).

[...] Today, the world has the highest number of students in history. The figures are encouraging, with some 110 million children who complete primary education. Yet troubling inequalities continue to exist. Indeed, some 250 million children and adolescents do not attend school. We are morally obliged to change this situation. For cultural genocide is not only about the destruction of a people’s heritage; cultural genocide also takes place when children are robbed of their future by our failure to provide the conditions necessary for them to become all that they can be. As when we see in so many places children rummaging through refuse for things to sell so as to have something to eat. Let us think of the future of humanity when we look at these children.

In his book *Wind, Sand and Stars*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry walks through the third class carriages of a train full of refugee families. He stops to look at them. And he writes that he is tormented by an open wound: “It is the sight, a little bit in all these people, of Mozart murdered”. Ours is an immense, immense respon-

sibility! To educate is to dare to support the growth of others, as if to say, with Augustine: *Volo ut sis*, “I want you to *be*”. That is education.

A particularly important element in this time of epochal change is that of scientific development and technological innovation. We can hardly ignore the rapid advances made in such areas as the digital transition and artificial intelligence, with all their implications and the crucial questions they raise. I would ask the research centres of our universities to study the present “technological revolution” in order to shed light on its benefits and dangers.

This being said, I repeat: rather than yielding to fear, we should keep in mind that complex cultural transitions often prove to be highly fruitful and creative moments for the advancement of knowledge. Our contemplation of the risen Christ gives us the courage to face the future with confidence, trusting in his challenging invitation: “Let us go across to the farther shore” (*Mk 4:35*). Please, do not be retired teachers! Teachers always keep going, always.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL JAIN DELEGATION*

Hall of Popes, 25 November 2024

I extend a warm welcome to you as you gather here from different parts of the world, brought together by the Institute of Jainology in London. I am pleased that your meeting is part of the now decades-old and growing dialogue between Jains and Christians, promoted by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.

During this meeting, you and several members of the Dicastery will discuss proposals on how to work together for a better future, touching on issues such as diversity and inclusion. I would like to share some unfortunate news with you. The head of the Dicastery, Cardinal Ayuso, is in very poor health and in the final stages of life. Let us pray for him. I thank you for your efforts to seek together ways of caring for the earth, the poor and the most vulnerable in society. These areas of reflection and action have become increasingly important in our times, and call for initiatives undertaken with seriousness and commitment, as well as a sense of shared responsibility.

Many of the problems that plague society today are the result of an individualism and indifference that lead people to disregard the dignity and rights of their neighbours, especially in multicultural settings. There are some groups that intimi-

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241125-delegazione-jainista.html>

date and exclude minorities, turning a deaf ear to the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (*Laudato Si*, 49). Yet there are others that promote social friendship and seek to favour solidarity and lasting peace. Three things always to keep in mind: social friendship, solidarity and peace.

Sadly, those constructive efforts often encounter obstacles and roadblocks. Nonetheless, we must not grow discouraged or be afraid to continue spreading hope through initiatives that foster a sense of humanity in believers and in all. This persevering commitment to fraternal solidarity is based on the fact that it is “God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters” (*Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019). We must never forget about universal fraternity. Every person of good will can spread love and help others in need, while at the same time respecting their differences. This approach to life continually revitalizes our efforts to care for one another and for our common home.

Interfaith meetings, such as this that you have organized, help strengthen our common desire to work together for a better world.

COMMEMORATIVE ACT ON THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND CHILE*

Sala Regia, 25 November 2024

I wanted to highlight this anniversary also by inviting the Cardinals and the members of the Diplomatic Corps, whom I thank for their presence. Moreover, I would like to take this occasion in order to launch a renewed appeal to the world, at this particular moment, on behalf of peace and dialogue. The steadfast commitment shown by the two countries during the long and difficult negotiations, and the fruits of peace and friendship that were borne, can serve as a model worthy of imitation.

In 2009, in the Preface to the late Archbishop Carmelo Juan Giaquinta’s book on the *Treaty of Peace and Friendship*, I wrote: “The Treaty was made possible thanks to the mediation of Pope John Paul II and the confidence placed in him by our peoples and leaders. Yet how did we arrive at the Pope’s mediation? ... It was above all due to the prayers of our people – our peoples –, who detest war...

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241125-atto-commemorativo.html>

After Pope John Paul II intervened, at Christmas in 1978, the efforts made by the two Episcopates were unceasing. Without involvement in the mediation itself, which was exclusively the domain of the Pope and the Governments of Argentina and Chile, there was a need to encourage, support and defend the papal mediation from more than a few outside threats, so that it could reach its satisfactory conclusion in November 1984, practically six years after it began”.

From the very first days of his pontificate, Saint John Paul II was concerned not only to prevent the dispute between Argentina and Chile “from degenerating into a disgraceful armed conflict, but also to find a way to definitively resolve this dispute”. At the request of the two governments, accompanied by concrete and stringent commitments, the Pope agreed to mediate with the aim of proposing “a just and equitable, and therefore honourable solution”. During the mediation process, the Pope expressed his intent in these terms: “so that a satisfactory solution may be found, through the goodwill of both parties, based on justice and international law, which excludes the use of force”. These days we are experiencing the unhappy outcome of the use of force.

The title of the Treaty between Argentina and Chile defines this in two words: *peace and friendship*. Let us reflect on them for a moment.

The first is peace. Upon the Ratification of the Treaty, on 2 May 1985, John Paul II expressed his joy, because – in his words – agreement “consolidates peace in such a way as to justifiably give the well-founded confidence of its stability”. This gift of peace, the Pope insisted, would nonetheless require a daily effort to preserve it from the obstacles that might oppose it and to encourage everything that might serve to enrich it. Indeed, the Treaty offers suitable means for achieving two ends, namely the resolution of eventual differences and the promotion of “a harmonious friendship through cooperation in all fields, aimed at a closer integration of the two nations”. This model for the complete, definitive and peaceful settlement of a dispute deserves – as I recently stated – to be re-proposed in the current world situation, in which so many conflicts persist and degenerate without an effective will to resolve them through the absolute exclusion of recourse to force or the threat of its use. This is the tragic situation that we are presently experiencing.

The second word is friendship. “As the icy winds of war blow, joining with recurrent phenomena of injustice, violence and inequality, as well as the grave climate crisis and unprecedented anthropological change, it is imperative to stop and ask ourselves: is there something worth living for and hoping for?” In effect, these setbacks, difficulties and failures can be seen as a summons to reflection; they invite us to open our hearts to an encounter with God and to grow more conscious of ourselves, our neighbours and the realities all around us. Let us not forget that we are “beggars”, sovereign beggars. We are called to become “beggars of the essential”, of what gives authentic meaning to our lives. “By doing so, we discover

that the value of human existence does not consist in things, in successes achieved, in the race of competition, but first and foremost in that relationship of love which sustains us, rooting our journey in trust and hope. Sisters and brothers, it is friendship with God, which is then reflected in all other human relationships, that is the foundation of the joy which will never fail”.

A few weeks ago, on the occasion of this fortieth anniversary, the Bishops of Argentina and Chile signed a new declaration recalling how the Treaty “prevented war between brother peoples”. The Bishops of both countries thanked God because that agreement enabled dialogue and peace to prevail. At the same time, they expressed their gratitude to Saint John Paul II for his offer to mediate between the two countries, a mediation that was carried out by Cardinals Antonio Samorè and Agostino Casaroli, two great men.

I concur with the sentiments of the Bishops of Chile and Argentina in giving thanks to God for protecting us and saving us from war! Along with the Cardinals and Bishops of those two countries, we are grateful for the peace and cooperation existing between the two nations, and confident that this path can be further deepened for the good of the two peoples. It is my hope that the spirit of encounter and concord between nations seeking peace, in Latin America and throughout the world, may favour the multiplication of coordinated initiatives and policies aimed at resolving the numerous social and environmental crises that affect populations in all continents and certainly prove detrimental to the poor.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty, a commemorative ceremony was held here in the Vatican on 28 November 2009, honoured by the visit of the Presidents of Argentina, Mrs Cristina Fernández Kirchner, and of Chile, Mrs Michelle Bachelet. On that occasion, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that Chile and Argentina are not just two neighbouring nations, but much more. “They are”, he said, “two brother peoples with a common vocation to fraternity, respect and friendship, which are largely a result of the Catholic tradition at the root of their history and their rich cultural and spiritual patrimony”.

Now, forty years later, we renew our gratitude for the efforts of all who, in the governments and diplomatic delegations of both countries, contributed to pursuing that path of peaceful resolution in response to the yearnings for peace of the Argentinean and Chilean people. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship, as Pope Benedict said, “is a shining example of the power of the human spirit and the desire for peace in the face of the barbarity and senselessness of violence and war as a means of resolving differences”. It is a most timely example of the need to “persevere at every moment with firm determination to the final consequences in an endeavor to resolve disputes with a real desire for dialogue and agreement, through patient negotiation and with the necessary compromises, always taking into account the just requirements and legitimate interests of all”.

In this regard, how can I not refer to the many ongoing armed conflicts that remain still unresolved, despite the fact that they cause immense sufferings for the countries at war and the entire human family. Here I would point to the hypocrisy of speaking of peace and dabbling in war. In some countries where there is much talk of peace, the highest yielding investments are in the production of arms. This hypocrisy always leads to failure. The failure of fraternity, the failure of peace. May the international community make the force of law prevail through dialogue, for dialogue “must be the soul of the international community”.

TO THE HOLY LAND “UNIVERSAL PEACE COUNCIL”*

Consistory Hall, 25 November 2024

I commend your dedication to the cause of peace in the Holy Land, which sadly has witnessed much violence and suffering through the centuries. Unfortunately, our own day is no different and for over a year now, the dark clouds of conflict have once more engulfed the region of the world you call home. It is terrible, terrible.

The current situation makes the promotion of peace all the more important and I am delighted to see that your delegation is composed of young people from different backgrounds and faiths. This is a clear sign that the desire for peace is rooted in the human heart and is able to bring about unity in diversity. We all know, however, that your task is not easy. As a result, I would like to offer you three brief points to consider.

The first is that *we need young people* to carry out this important service because they possess a certain idealism, enthusiasm and hope that reminds all of us that a better world is possible, peace is possible. In particular, young people can help others to discover the crucial elements that prepare the way for peace: forgiveness and a willingness to let go of past prejudices and hurts. Young people are creative, but it is terrible to meet young people who have fallen prey to ideologies. In these cases, ideology takes the place of rational thought and the desire to do good. While we must always remember and learn from history, an unhealthy attachment to past hurts and prejudices can never lead to true and lasting peace. In fact, it only perpetuates the spiral of conflict and division.

The second point is always *to engage in dialogue*, since it is the principal tool

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241125-universal-peace-council.html>

at our disposal. “Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word ‘dialogue’” (FT, 198). Dialogue is the only path for peace, for encountering one another. Young people can be great artisans of peace through dialogue.

The third is *never to lose hope*. Hope never disappoints. Do not lose hope. It is so easy to become discouraged when we see the devastating effects of war and hatred, not to mention poverty, hunger, discrimination and various other realities that threaten the prospect of peace. They are the fruit of war. This may lead us to think that our engagement in dialogue is futile because it produces few concrete results. Perhaps you may have even been criticized for focusing on the need to dialogue in order to advance the cause of peace. In those moments, remember that anything worth doing is not easy. It requires sacrifice and a willingness to recommit ourselves each day, especially when things seem not to go our way. Keep hope alive, dear young people, always bearing in mind that we are all part of one human family. We are all brothers and sisters, and efforts to promote reconciliation, harmony and peace will always be worth our time and effort. And of course, never lose your sense of humour, that healthy joy! That is very important! Do not lose the capacity for joy, which helps us to see things more clearly.

TO THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION*

28 November 2024

[...] In today’s complex and often polarized world, tragically marred by conflicts and violence, the love of God revealed in Christ and bestowed on us in the Spirit becomes an invitation to every man and woman to learn how to live fraternally and become an artisan of justice and peace. Only in this way can we sow seeds of hope wherever we live.

Putting Christ back at the centre means rekindling this hope, and this is precisely what theology is called to do, with perseverance, wisdom and foresight, and in dialogue with all other fields of knowledge.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241128-cti.html>

**TO THE CONFERENCE COMMEMORATING THE CENTENARY
OF THE FIRST “ALL RELIGIONS’ CONFERENCE”
ORGANIZED BY SREE NARAYANA GURU (1856-1928)***

Clementine Hall, 30 November 2024

I am happy to welcome all of you, belonging to diverse religious traditions, who have come from Kerala, India, and from other parts of the world to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the first “*All Religions’ Conference*” organized by the spiritual leader and social reformer Sree Narayana Guru. I am pleased to know that you will be taking part in an Interreligious Conference organized – with the support of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue – to commemorate this important event in the history of interreligious dialogue in India and in Asia. The theme chosen for the Conference, “*Religions Together for a Better Humanity*”, is indeed quite relevant and important for our times.

Sree Narayana Guru dedicated his life to promoting a social and religious awakening by his clear message that all human beings, regardless of their ethnicity or their religious and cultural traditions, are members of the single human family. He insisted that there should be no discrimination against anyone in any way and at any level. His message is pertinent to our world today, where we witness growing instances of intolerance and hatred between peoples and nations. Sadly, displays of discrimination and exclusion, tensions and violence based differences of ethnic or social origin, race, colour, language and religion are a daily experience of many individuals and communities, most especially among the poor, the powerless and those without a voice.

In the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* which I signed along with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, we stated that God “has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters” (Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019). All religions teach the fundamental truth that as children of one God we must love and honour one another, respect diversities and differences in a spirit of fraternity and inclusion, and take care of each other and the earth, our common home. Failure to follow the noble teachings of religions is one of the causes responsible for the troubled situation in which our world finds itself today. Our contemporaries will rediscover the value of the lofty teachings of religious traditions only if we all strive to live by them and to cultivate fraternal and friendly relationships

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/november/documents/20241130-conferenza-interreligiosa.html>

with everyone, with the sole aim of strengthening unity amid diversity, ensuring harmonious coexistence amid differences, and being peacemakers despite the difficulties and challenges we are bound to face.

As followers of our respective religious traditions, we ought always to cooperate with all people of good will in promoting “a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity” (*Joint Declaration of Istiqlal*, 5 September 2024). In this way, we can help to defeat the culture of individualism, exclusion, indifference and violence that sadly is spreading. Drawing from the spiritual truths and values that we have in common, yet firmly rooted in and committed to our own religious beliefs and convictions, may we walk together and work together to build a better humanity!

Dear friends, I thank you for your presence and for your commitment to dialogue and understanding between the followers of the different religions.

**MESSAGE TO HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW ON THE OCCASION
OF THE FEAST OF SAINT ANDREW, PATRON SAINT
OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE***

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 30 November 2024

Just a few days ago, 21 November, was the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which marked the Catholic Church’s official entry into the ecumenical movement. This important document of the Second Vatican Council opened the way for dialogue with other Churches. Our dialogue with the Orthodox Church has been and continues to be particularly fruitful. The first of the fruits obtained is certainly the renewed fraternity that we experience today with particular intensity, and for this I give thanks to God the Almighty Father. However, what *Unitatis Redintegratio* sets forth as the ultimate goal of dialogue, full communion among all Christians, sharing in the one Eucharistic chalice, has not yet been realized even with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. This is not surprising, for divisions dating back a millennium, cannot be resolved within a few decades. At the same time, as some theologians maintain, the goal of re-establishing full communion has an undeniable eschatological dimension inasmuch as the path to unity coincides with that of the salvation already given in Jesus

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20241130-messaggio-bartolomeo.html>

Christ, in which the Church will fully participate only at the end of time. This is not to say that we should lose sight of the ultimate goal for which we all yearn, nor can we lose hope that this unity can be achieved in the course of history and within a reasonable time. Catholics and Orthodox must never cease to pray and work together to dispose ourselves to accept the divine gift of unity.

The Catholic Church's irreversible commitment to the path of dialogue was reaffirmed by the recent Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held at the Vatican from 2 to 27 October 2024. The impetus for a renewed exercise of synodality in the Catholic Church will certainly foster relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which has always kept this constitutive ecclesial dimension alive. Beyond the concrete decisions that will flow from the work of the Assembly, an atmosphere of authentic and frank dialogue was experienced during those days. In a world torn by opposition and polarization, the participants in the Assembly, despite coming from very different backgrounds, were able to listen to each other without judging or condemning. Listening without condemning should also be the manner in which Catholics and Orthodox continue their journey towards unity. I am especially pleased that representatives from other Churches, including Metropolitan Job of Pisidia, a delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, actively participated in the synodal process. His presence and assiduous work was enriching for all and a tangible sign of the attention and support that you have always given to the synod process.

TO THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF SAINT PAUL (CATANIA, SICILY)*

Clementine Hall, 6 December 2024

[...]. “Our hearts, united with the heart of Christ, are capable of working this social miracle” (Encyclical Letter *Dilexit nos*, 28). Be aware that the culture and formation of a *Theological Studium* are at the service of the people, the poor, the last. In your land, which has always been a crossroads of peoples, many migrants land and many stay and become integrated: I urge you to be welcoming, to be creative in fraternity. And this commitment will be more fruitful if you know how to engage in dialogue with the cultures and religions of the other Mediterranean peoples, who look to the future with hope. Please, let us not extinguish the hope of the poor, of those poor who are the migrants! And you are welcoming towards

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241206-studio-teologico-catania.html>

migrants. Integrate migrants. For you, also the challenge of Muslim migrants: of how to integrate them and help them to enter into the dioceses.

Your *Theological Studium* has established a fruitful relationship with the University of Catania, the oldest cultural institution in Sicily, and many lecturers are involved in courses on Christian literature, law, and bioethics. This collaboration certainly benefits you, because it opens your studies and your future to a dialogue that must always be cultivated, to better understand the world in which you live and to inculcate the faith. On the other hand, it offers a fruitful contribution to the culture of your people, marked by the tragic nature of certain life experiences. I think of the greats of Sicilian literature, particularly Verga, who populates his novels with “losers”, resigned to pain and poverty. A film comes to mind that mirrors you well: “Kaos”. I have seen it three times, because I had to teach it as well. But it mirrors you well, your culture. In dialogue with this culture, which expresses itself in so many ways of living and thinking, know how to bring hope and commitment, *know how to “abound in hope”*. Never abound in complaint, in resignation, no... Complaining is a thing for people who have no courage. No, go forward with hope, and be missionaries of hope. Keep going, be brave!

**TO THE AMBASSADORS OF INDIA, JORDAN, DENMARK, LUXEMBOURG,
SÃO TOMÉ AND PRINCIPE, RWANDA, TURKMENISTAN, ALGERIA, BANGLADESH,
ZIMBABWE, AND KENYA***

Clementine Hall, 7 December 2024

[...]. Amid difficulties, setbacks, the clash of arms and conflicting claims to be on the side of right, the international community cannot renounce its duty to seek peace by fostering dialogue, reconciliation, mutual understanding, respect for the dignity and rights of each individual and people, and for the demands of international law. By its presence in the international community, the Holy See, in accordance with its specific nature and mission, seeks to promote such dialogue in the service of the common good, without advancing political, commercial, or military goals. Through its “positive neutrality” – I did not say “neutrality”, but “positive neutrality” – the Holy See also strives to contribute to the resolution of conflicts and other questions by making clear their intrinsic ethical dimension.

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241207-ambasciatori.html>

History has shown that much progress can be made in resolving seemingly intractable situations through quiet, patient and persistent diplomatic efforts inspired by mutual respect, good will and moral conviction. I once heard it said that the work of a diplomat is like a minuet dance: small steps in order to achieve harmony. Indeed, many current global problems are longstanding, which rather than discouraging us should prompt us to look for new and innovative solutions.

[...], I encourage the members of the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See to continue working with courage and creativity in promoting bonds of friendship, cooperation and dialogue in the service of peace. Your work, often quiet and hidden, will help to plant the seeds of a future of hope for our war-weary world.

MESSAGE FOR THE LVIII WORLD DAY OF PEACE, 1st JANUARY 2025

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES: GRANT US YOUR PEACE

From the Vatican, 8 December 2024

I. Listening to the plea of an endangered humanity

1. At the dawn of this New Year given to us by our heavenly Father, a year of Jubilee in the spirit of hope, I offer heartfelt good wishes of peace to every man and woman. I think especially of those who feel downtrodden, burdened by their past mistakes, oppressed by the judgment of others and incapable of perceiving even a glimmer of hope for their own lives. Upon everyone I invoke hope and peace, for this is a Year of Grace born of the Heart of the Redeemer!

2. Throughout this year, the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee, an event that fills hearts with hope. The “jubilee” recalls an ancient Jewish practice, when, every forty-ninth year, the sound of a ram’s horn (in Hebrew, *jobel*) would proclaim a year of forgiveness and freedom for the entire people (cf. *Lev 25:10*). This solemn proclamation was meant to echo throughout the land (cf. *Lev 25:9*) and to restore God’s justice in every aspect of life: in the use of the land, in the possession of goods and in relationships with others, above all the poor and the dispossessed. The blowing of the horn reminded the entire people, rich and poor alike, that no one comes into this world doomed to oppression: all of us are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father, born to live in freedom, in accordance with the Lord’s will (cf. *Lev 25:17, 25, 43, 46, 55*).

3. In our day too, the Jubilee is an event that inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world. In place of the ram’s horn, at the start of

this Year of Grace we wish to hear the “desperate plea for help”¹ that, like the cry of the blood of Abel (cf. *Gen 4:10*), rises up from so many parts of our world – a plea that God never fails to hear. We for our part feel bound to cry out and denounce the many situations in which the earth is exploited and our neighbours oppressed.² These injustices can appear at times in the form of what Saint John Paul II called “structures of sin”,³ that arise not only from injustice on the part of some but are also consolidated and maintained by a network of complicity.

4. Each of us must feel in some way responsible for the devastation to which the earth, our common home, has been subjected, beginning with those actions that, albeit only indirectly, fuel the conflicts that presently plague our human family. Systemic challenges, distinct yet interconnected, are thus created and together cause havoc in our world.⁴ I think, in particular, of all manner of disparities, the inhuman treatment meted out to migrants, environmental decay, the confusion willfully created by disinformation, the refusal to engage in any form of dialogue and the immense resources spent on the industry of war. All these, taken together, represent a threat to the existence of humanity as a whole. At the beginning of this year, then, we desire to heed the plea of suffering humankind in order to feel called, together and as individuals, to break the bonds of injustice and to proclaim God’s justice. Sporadic acts of philanthropy are not enough. Cultural and structural changes are necessary, so that enduring change may come about.⁵

II. A cultural change: all of us are debtors

5. The celebration of the Jubilee spurs us to make a number of changes in order to confront the present state of injustice and inequality by reminding ourselves that the goods of the earth are meant not for a privileged few, but for everyone.⁶ We do well to recall the words of Saint Basil of Caesarea: “Tell me, what things belong to you? Where did you find them to make them part of your life? ... Did you not come forth naked from the womb of your mother? Will you not return naked to the ground? Where did your property come from? If you say that it comes to you naturally by luck, you would deny God by not recognizing the Creator and

¹ Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 8.

² Cf. SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 51.

³ Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 36.

⁴ Cf. *Address to Participants in the Summit of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of Social Sciences*, 16 May 2024.

⁵ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum* (4 October 2023), 70.

⁶ Cf. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 16.

being grateful to the Giver”.⁷ Without gratitude, we are unable to recognize God’s gifts. Yet in his infinite mercy the Lord does not abandon sinful humanity, but instead reaffirms his *gift* of life by the saving *forgiveness* offered to all through Jesus Christ. That is why, in teaching us the “Our Father”, Jesus told us to pray: “Forgive us our trespasses” (*Mt 6:12*).

6. Once we lose sight of our relationship to the Father, we begin to cherish the illusion that our relationships with others can be governed by a logic of exploitation and oppression, where might makes right.⁸ Like the elites at the time of Jesus, who profited from the suffering of the poor, so today, in our interconnected global village,⁹ the international system, unless it is inspired by a spirit of solidarity and interdependence, gives rise to injustices, aggravated by corruption, which leave the poorer countries trapped. A mentality that exploits the indebted can serve as a shorthand description of the present “debt crisis” that weighs upon a number of countries, above all in the global South.

7. I have repeatedly stated that foreign debt has become a means of control whereby certain governments and private financial institutions of the richer countries unscrupulously and indiscriminately exploit the human and natural resources of poorer countries, simply to satisfy the demands of their own markets.¹⁰ In addition, different peoples, already burdened by international debt, find themselves also forced to bear the burden of the “ecological debt” incurred by the more developed countries.¹¹ Foreign debt and ecological debt are two sides of the same coin, namely the mindset of exploitation that has culminated in the debt crisis.¹² In the spirit of this Jubilee Year, I urge the international community to work towards forgiving foreign debt in recognition of the ecological debt existing between the North and the South of this world. This is an appeal for solidarity, but above all for justice.¹³

8. The cultural and structural change needed to surmount this crisis will come about when we finally recognize that we are all sons and daughters of the one Father, that we are all in his debt but also that we need one another, in a spirit of

⁷ *Homilia de avaritia*, 7: PG 31, 275.

⁸ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 123.

⁹ Cf. *Catechesis*, 2 September 2020: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 September 2020, p. 8.

¹⁰ Cf. *Address to Participants in the Meeting “Addressing the Debt Crisis in the Global South”*, 5 June 2024.

¹¹ Cf. *Address to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – COP 28*, 2 December 2023.

¹² Cf. *Address to Participants in the Meeting “Addressing Debt Crisis in the Global South”*, 5 June 2024.

¹³ Cf. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 16.

shared and diversified responsibility. We will be able to “rediscover once for all that we need one another” and are indebted one to another.¹⁴

III. A journey of hope: three proposals

9. If we take to heart these much-needed changes, the Jubilee Year of Grace can serve to set each of us on a renewed journey of hope, born of the experience of God’s unlimited mercy.¹⁵

God owes nothing to anyone, yet he constantly bestows his grace and mercy upon all. As Isaac of Nineveh, a seventh-century Father of the Eastern Church, put it in one of his prayers: “Your love, Lord, is greater than my trespasses. The waves of the sea are nothing with respect to the multitude of my sins, but placed on a scale and weighed against your love, they vanish like a speck of dust”.¹⁶ God does not weigh up the evils we commit; rather, he is immensely “rich in mercy, for the great love with which he loved us” (*Eph 2:4*). Yet he also hears the plea of the poor and the cry of the earth. We would do well simply to stop for a moment, at the beginning of this year, to think of the mercy with which he constantly forgives our sins and forgives our every debt, so that our hearts may overflow with hope and peace.

10. In teaching us to pray the “Our Father”, Jesus begins by asking the Father to forgive our trespasses, but passes immediately to the challenging words: “as we forgive those who trespass against us” (cf. *Mt 6:12*). In order to forgive others their trespasses and to offer them hope, we need for our own lives to be filled with that same hope, the fruit of our experience of God’s mercy. Hope overflows in generosity; it is free of calculation, makes no hidden demands, is unconcerned with gain, but aims at one thing alone: to raise up those who have fallen, to heal hearts that are broken and to set us free from every kind of bondage.

11. Consequently, at the beginning of this Year of Grace, I would like to offer three proposals capable of restoring dignity to the lives of entire peoples and enabling them to set them out anew on the journey of hope. In this way, the debt crisis can be overcome and all of us can once more realize that we are debtors whose debts have been forgiven.

First, I renew the appeal launched by Saint John Paul II on the occasion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 to consider “reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future

¹⁴ Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 35.

¹⁵ Cf. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 23.

¹⁶ *Oratio X*, 100-101: CSCO 638, 115. Saint Augustine could even state that God remains constantly in our debt: “Since ‘your mercy is everlasting’, you deign by your promises to become a debtor to all those whose sins you forgive” (cf. *Confessions*, 5, 9, 17: PL 32, 714).

of many nations”.¹⁷ In recognition of their ecological debt, the more prosperous countries ought to feel called to do everything possible to forgive the debts of those countries that are in no condition to repay the amount they owe. Naturally, lest this prove merely an isolated act of charity that simply reboots the vicious cycle of financing and indebtedness, a new financial framework must be devised, leading to the creation of a global financial Charter based on solidarity and harmony between peoples.

I also ask for a firm commitment to respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, so that each person can cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to a future of prosperity and happiness for themselves and for their children. Without hope for the future, it becomes hard for the young to look forward to bringing new lives into the world. Here I would like once more to propose a concrete gesture that can help foster the culture of life, namely the elimination of the death penalty in all nations. This penalty not only compromises the inviolability of life but eliminates every human hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation.¹⁸

In addition, following in the footsteps of Saint Paul VI and Benedict XVI,¹⁹ I do not hesitate to make yet another appeal, for the sake of future generations. In this time marked by wars, let us use at least a fixed percentage of the money earmarked for armaments to establish a global Fund to eradicate hunger and facilitate in the poorer countries educational activities aimed at promoting sustainable development and combating climate change.²⁰ We need to work at eliminating every pretext that encourages young people to regard their future as hopeless or dominated by the thirst to avenge the blood of their dear ones. The future is a gift meant to enable us to go beyond past failures and to pave new paths of peace.

IV. The goal of peace

12. Those who take up these proposals and set out on the journey of hope will surely glimpse the dawn of the greatly desired goal of peace. The *Psalmist* promises us that “steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will

¹⁷ Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 51.

¹⁸ Cf. Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 10.

¹⁹ Cf. SAINT PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 51; BENE-DICT XVI, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 9 January 2006; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 90.

²⁰ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 262; *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 8 January 2024; *Address to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – COP 28*, 2 December 2023.

kiss” (*P*: 85:10). When I divest myself of the weapon of credit and restore the path of hope to one of my brothers or sisters, I contribute to the restoration of God’s justice on this earth and, with that person, I advance towards the goal of peace. As Saint John XXIII observed, true peace can be born only from a heart “disarmed” of anxiety and the fear of war.²¹

13. May 2025 be a year in which peace flourishes! A true and lasting peace that goes beyond quibbling over the details of agreements and human compromises.²² May we seek the true peace that is granted by God to hearts disarmed: hearts not set on calculating what is mine and what is yours; hearts that turn selfishness into readiness to reach out to others; hearts that see themselves as indebted to God and thus prepared to forgive the debts that oppress others; hearts that replace anxiety about the future with the hope that every individual can be a resource for the building of a better world.

14. Disarming hearts is a job for everyone, great and small, rich and poor alike. At times, something quite simple will do, such as “a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed”.²³ With such gestures, we progress towards the goal of peace. We will arrive all the more quickly if, in the course of journeying alongside our brothers and sisters, we discover that we have changed from the time we first set out. Peace does not only come with the end of wars but with the dawn of a new world, a world in which we realize that we are different, closer and more fraternal than we ever thought possible.

15. Lord, grant us your peace! This is my prayer to God as I now offer my cordial good wishes for the New Year to the Heads of State and Government, to the leaders of International Organizations, to the leaders of the various religions and to every person of good will.

*Forgive us our trespasses, Lord,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
In this cycle of forgiveness, grant us your peace,
the peace that you alone can give
to those who let themselves be disarmed in heart,
to those who choose in hope to forgive the debts of their brothers and sisters,
to those who are unafraid to confess their debt to you,
and to those who do not close their ears to the cry of the poor.*

²¹ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), Carlen 113.

²² Cf. *Moment of Prayer on the Tenth Anniversary of the “Invocation for Peace in the Holy Land”*, 7 June 2024.

²³ Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 *Spes Non Confundit* (9 May 2024), 18.

TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE FUTURE OF THEOLOGY
ORGANIZED BY THE DICASTERY FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION*

Hall of Benediction, 9 December 2024

[...]. when I think of theology, *light* comes to mind. Thanks to light, objects emerge from darkness, faces reveal their contours, the shapes and colours of the world finally become visible. Light is beautiful because it makes things appear but without showing itself. Has any of us seen light? No, but we see what light does: it makes things visible. Now, here, we admire this room, we see each other, but we do not see the light, because it is discreet, gentle, humble and, therefore, remains unseen. Light is “kindly”. Theology too is like that: it works quietly and humbly so that the light of Christ and his Gospel can emerge. This observation can point the way for you. Seek God’s grace and persevere in the grace of friendship with Christ, the true light that came into this world. All theology is born of friendship with Christ and love for his brothers, his sisters and his world: this world, at once magnificent and tragic, filled with overwhelming beauty but also great suffering.

I understand that these days you will be working together on the “where”, the “how” and the “why” of theology. We may wonder: Theology, where are you? With whom are you going? What are you doing for humanity? These days will prove important for addressing these issues and questioning whether the theological heritage of the past can still speak to today’s challenges and help us imagine the future. This is a journey you are called to undertake together as theologians of both sexes. Here I think of an episode in the *Second Book of Kings*. During the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem, a text came to light; perhaps it was the first edition of Deuteronomy, which had been lost. A priest and several scholars read it, as did the king. They sensed its importance but did not understand it. So the king decided to give it to a woman, Huldah, who immediately understood its meaning and helped the group of scholars – all men – to grasp it (Cf. *2 Kings 22:14-20*). There are things that only women understand and theology needs their contribution. An all-male theology is an incomplete theology. We still have a long way to go in this direction.

And now let me leave you with a desire and an invitation.

The desire is this: that *theology help to rethink how to think*. Our way of thinking, as we know, also shapes our feelings, our will and our decisions. A wide heart is accompanied by a wide-ranging imagination and thinking, whereas a

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241209-convegno-teologia.html>

shrivelled, closed and mediocre way of thinking is hardly capable of generating creativity and courage. I think of the manuals of theology we studied, all closed, all “museum pieces”, all “bookish”, without making you think.

The first thing to do, in rethinking how to think, is to move beyond simplification. Reality is complex; challenges are varied; history is full of beauty and at the same time marred by evil. When someone cannot or does not want to deal with its dramatic complexity, then he or she easily tends to simplify. Simplification, however, mutilates reality; it gives rise to empty and unilateral thinking and it generates polarization and fragmentation. That, for example, is precisely what ideologies do. Ideology is a simplification that kills: it kills reality, it kills thought, it kills community. Ideologies flatten reality to a single, shallow idea, which – like parrots – they then repeat obsessively and manipulate.

One antidote to simplification is indicated by the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*: inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches (*Foreward*, 4c). This involves letting theological reflection “ferment” in combination with other disciplines: philosophy, literature, the arts, mathematics, physics, history, law, politics and economics. These disciplines ought to ferment, because, like the senses of the body, each has its own specific function, yet they need each other, for, as the Apostle Paul points out, “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” (*1 Cor 12:17*). This year we celebrate the 750th anniversary of the death of two great theologians: Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure. Thomas tells us that we do not have a single sense, but multiple and different senses, so that reality does not escape us (*De Anima*, lib. 2, lect. 25). And Bonaventure states that to the extent that one “believes, hopes and loves Jesus Christ” one “regains hearing and sight..., smell..., taste and touch” (*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, IV, 3). By helping to rethink how to think, theology will once again shine forth as it deserves, in the Church and in the various cultures, helping each and all in the pursuit of truth.

That is the desire. I would like now to leave you with an invitation, namely, that *theology be accessible to all*. For some time now, in many parts of the world there has been an interest among adults to resume their education, including their academic training. Men and women, especially in middle age and perhaps already holding a degree, desire to deepen their faith, to try something new; often they enrol in university courses. This is a growing phenomenon and it merits interest on the part of society and the Church. Middle age is a special time in life. It is a time when one usually enjoys a certain professional security and emotional stability, but also a time when failures are painfully felt and new questions arise as youthful dreams fade. When this happens, people can feel abandoned or even at an impasse – a mid-life crisis. Then they sense a need to renew their quest, however tentatively, perhaps even with a helping hand. Theology can be that guide on the

journey! Please, if any of these people knock at the door of theology, of the schools of theology, may they find it open. Make sure that these women and men find in theology an open house, a place where they can resume their journey, a place where they can seek, find and seek again. Be prepared for this. Make imaginative adjustments to your programmes of study so that theology can be accessible to all.

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO AJACCIO

(Sunday, 15 December 2024)

ADDRESS TO THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE CONGRESS “LA RELIGIOSITÉ POPULAIRE EN MÉDITERRANÉE”*

Palais des Congrès et d'Exposition, 15 December 2024

Between the Mediterranean and the Near East, a unique religious experience was born, bound to the God of Israel, who revealed himself to humanity and began a continuous dialogue with his people. This dialogue culminated in the singular presence of Jesus, the Son of God. He has revealed the face of the Father, his and ours, in a definitive way, and brought to fulfilment the covenant between God and humanity.

More than two thousand years have passed since the Incarnation of the Son of God, and since then, numerous ages and cultures have come and gone. In some periods of history, the Christian faith shaped the lives of peoples and their political institutions, whereas today, especially in European countries, the question of God seems to be retreating as people become increasingly indifferent to his presence and his word. Even so, in analysing this scenario, we need to beware of hasty considerations and ideological judgements that, even in our day, would pit Christian culture and secular culture against one another. This is a mistake!

Instead, it is important to acknowledge a mutual openness between these two horizons. Believers are increasingly open to, and at peace with the possibility of practising their faith without imposing it, living it as a leaven within the world and in their communities. Non-believers or those who have distanced themselves from religious practice are not strangers to the search for truth, justice and solidarity. Often, even if they do not belong to any religion, they carry in their hearts a great thirst, a search for meaning, which leads them to ponder the mystery of life and to seek out core values for the common good.

In this context, we can appreciate the beauty and importance of popular piety (cf. Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 48). It was Saint Paul VI who changed the name in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* from “religiosity” to popular “piety”. On the one hand, popular piety points back to the Incarnation as the foundation of the Christian faith, which always finds expression in a people’s culture, history and languages and is transmitted through the symbols, customs, rites and traditions of a living community. On the other hand, such piety also attracts and involves persons who

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241215-ajaccio-congresso.html>

are on the threshold of faith. Although they may not practice their faith regularly, popular piety enables them to experience their roots and affections, as well as to encounter ideals and values that they find useful for their own lives and for society.

By expressing faith through simple gestures and a symbolic language rooted in the culture of the people, popular piety reveals God's presence in the living flesh of history, strengthens the relationship with the Church and often becomes an occasion for encounter, cultural exchange and celebration. It is curious: a piety that is not festive does not "have a good aroma", it is not a piety that comes from the people, it is too "distilled". In this sense, its practices give life to the relationship with the Lord and to the content of the faith. In this regard, I would like to mention a reflection by Blaise Pascal. In a dialogue with a fictional interlocutor about how to come to faith, Pascal states that it is not enough to multiply the proofs of God's existence or to make great intellectual efforts. Rather, one must look to those who have already made great progress on the path, because they began with small steps, by "taking holy water and having Masses said" (*Pensieri, Opere complete*, Milan, 2020, n. 681). It is about the small steps that take you forward. Popular piety is piety that is involved with culture, but not confused with culture. It takes small steps.

Nor should we forget that "popular piety enables us to see how the faith, once received, becomes embodied in a culture and is constantly passed on", and as a result, "it is an active evangelizing power which we must not underestimate: to do so would be to fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 123; 126). The Holy Spirit works through the holy People of God, by leading them forward in daily discernments. We think of Deacon Philip, a poor man, who one day was led [by the Spirit] onto a road and then heard a pagan, a servant of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, reading the prophet Isaiah and not understanding. He approached and asked, "Do you understand?" The pagan replied "No". So Philip announced the Gospel to him. That pagan, who had received faith at that time, went to where there was water and asked, "Philip, can you baptize me now, here in this water?" Philip did not say, "No, he has to take a course, he has to bring the godparents, both of them have to be married in the Church, or he has to do this...." No, he baptized him. Baptism is the gift of faith that Jesus gives us.

We must be careful so that popular piety is not used or exploited by groups that seek self-aggrandizement by fuelling polemics, narrow-mindedness, divisions and exclusivist attitudes. None of this corresponds to the Christian spirit of popular piety, and everyone, especially the Church's Pastors, is called to be vigilant, to exercise discernment and to be constantly attentive to popular forms of religiosity.

When popular piety is successful in communicating the Christian faith and the cultural values of a given people, uniting hearts and building community, it bears great fruit that has an effect on society as a whole, including relations be-

tween political, social and institutions and the Church. Faith cannot remain a private affair. We have to be careful about this, I would say privatization of faith is a heretical development. A fact that is restricted in the sanctuary of the individual's conscience, but if it intends to be fully true to itself, authentic faith involves a call for commitment and witness, promotion of human development, social progress and care for creation, all in the name of charity. For this very reason, down the centuries, the profession of the Christian faith and models of community life inspired by the Gospel and the sacraments have given rise to countless works of solidarity, including the establishment of institutions such as hospitals, schools, care centres – there are many in France! – that have enabled the faithful to assist the needy and to contribute to the advancement of the common good. Popular piety, processions and rogations, the charitable activities of Confraternities, the communal prayer of the Holy Rosary and other forms of devotion can nurture “constructive citizenship” on the part of Christians.

Sometimes some intellectuals, some theologians do not understand this. I remember when I once went for a week to northern Argentina, to Salta, where there is the feast of Señor de los Milagros, the Lord of Miracles. The whole province converges on the Shrine, and all the people go to confession, from the mayor downwards because they have this piety inside. I used to go to confession all the time, and it was a tiring work because all the people confess. One day, on the way out, I found a priest I knew and I said, “Oh, you are here, how are you?” He replied “Good!” As we were going out, at that moment a lady approached with some holy cards in her hand and she said to the priest, a good theologian, “Father, will you bless them?” The priest, with great theology, says to her, “But, madam, have you been to Mass?”. She replied “Yes, Father”. He said, “Do you know that at the end of Mass, everything is blessed?” She replied, “Yes, Father”. He continued, “Do you know that God's blessing comes down upon you?”. She replied “Yes, Father.” At that moment another priest called him, “Oh, how are you?” The lady who had repeated so many times “yes, Father” turned to the other one and said, “Father, will you bless them for me?” There is a desire for help, a healthy desire for help that seeks the Lord's blessing and does not accept generalizations.

At the same time, on the common ground of boldly carrying out good works, of asking for blessings, that believers can also find themselves cooperating with secular, civil and political institutions in the service of each person, beginning with the poor, for an integral human growth and the care of this “*Île de beauté*”.

Hence the need to develop a concept of secularity (*laïcité*) that is not static and fixed, but evolving and dynamic, capable of adapting to different and unforeseen situations, and of promoting constant cooperation between civil and ecclesial authorities for the benefit of the whole community, each within the limits of its own competences and areas of activity. As Benedict XVI stated, a healthy secularity

“frees religion from the encumbrance of politics, and allows politics to be enriched by the contribution of religion, while maintaining the necessary distance, clear distinction and indispensable collaboration between the two spheres... This kind of healthy secularity ensures that political activity does not manipulate religion, while the practice of religion remains free from a politics of self-interest, which at times is barely compatible with, if not downright contrary to, religious belief. For this reason, a healthy secularity, embodying unity in distinction, is necessary and even vital for both spheres” (*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, 29). Benedict XVI pointed out a healthy secularism, but alongside a religiosity. Both fields are respected.

In this way, more effective forms of collaboration can develop, without prejudice or opposition, in a dialogue that is open, frank and fruitful.

PRAYER OF THE ANGELUS WITH BISHOPS, PRIESTS, DEACONS, CONSECRATED PERSONS AND SEMINARIANS IN AJACCIO*

Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, 15 December 2024

I would like to present you with a double invitation: *care for yourself and care for others*.

First, care for yourself. The priestly or religious life is not just a “yes” that we say once and for all. There is no living off the Lord! On the contrary, every day we must renew the joy of encountering him; at every moment we need to listen to his voice anew and decide once more to follow him, even when we fall. Rise up, look towards the Lord: “Forgive me, help me to keep going”. That is fraternal and filial closeness.

Remember this: our lives find expression in our gift of self, but the more often priests or religious spend themselves in service to God’s Kingdom, the more they need also to care for themselves. Priests, sisters or deacons who neglect themselves will also end up neglecting the people entrusted to their care. That is why it takes a little “rule of life” – which the religious already have! – that includes a time set aside daily for prayer and the Eucharist and for dialogue with the Lord, each one according to his or her own spirituality and style. I would also say: set aside some moments of solitude, have a brother or sister with whom you can freely share what is in your heart – what was once called a spiritual director – develop an interest, not as a way of filling your spare time, but as a way of taking a healthy rest

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241215-ajaccio-chiesa.html>

from the burdens of ministry. Ministry can be tiring! We ought to be concerned about those people who are always on the go, always at the centre of attention, and perhaps through overzealousness never settle down, never take a moment for themselves. Brothers and sisters, that is not good. There need to be places to go and times set aside when every priest and every religious can tend to themselves. But not to get a facelift to be more attractive, no! Speak with your Friend, your Lord, and especially with your Mother – do not forget about Our Lady, please! Talk to them about your life and how things are going. Always go to your confessor or some friend who knows you well to talk and let him or her help you discern well. Being a “mushroom priest” is not good!

Another thing is part of this care: fraternity among yourselves. We should learn to share not only our struggles and challenges, but also our joy and our friendship among ourselves. Your Bishop says something that I like, namely, that it is important to move from the “Book of Lamentations” to the “Book of the Song of Songs”. This is not done often. We prefer the lamentations! And if the poor Bishop forgets his zucchetto one morning, you say, “Oh, look at the Bishop...” Just another excuse to complain about the Bishop. The Bishop, of course, is a sinner like all of us. We are all brothers and sisters! Switch from the “Book of Lamentations” to the “Book of the Song of Songs”. And this is important. One of the *Psalms* says the same thing: “You have turned my mourning into dancing” (30:11). Let us share our joy at being apostles and disciples of the Lord! Joy must be shared. Otherwise, the place for joy is taken up by vinegar. It is unfortunate when you meet a priest with a bitter heart. It is unfortunate. “What happened?” – “Well, the Bishop does not like me... Because they named that other priest Bishop instead of me... Because... Because...” Complaints. Please, put an end to complaints and envy. Do not turn green with envy. Let us ask the Lord to change our lamentation into dancing, to give us a sense of humour with evangelical simplicity.

Second: Care for others. The mission that each of you has received has only one purpose: to bring Christ to others, to bring the consolation of the Gospel to the hearts of our brothers and sisters. Here I would like to recall the time when the apostle Paul was about to return to Corinth. Writing to the community there, he says: “I will most gladly spend and be spent for you” (2 Cor 12:15). Spending ourselves for souls, being spent in offering ourselves in service to those entrusted to us. I am reminded of a young holy priest who recently died of cancer. He lived in a slum with the poorest of the poor. He used to say: “Sometimes I feel like closing the window with bricks, because people come at all hours and if I do not open the door, they knock on the window”. This priest’s heart was open to all, without distinction.

Listen to others, be close to them. This is an invitation for us to discover, in today’s context, the most effective pastoral means of evangelization. Do not be

afraid of changing, of reassessing the old methods, of renewing the language of faith and realizing that the mission is not a question of human strategies, but above all a question of faith. Care for others: those who follow Jesus' teaching, those who have strayed from him, those who need to be set back on the right track or find consolation amid their sufferings. Care for everyone, in formation and above all in encounter. Encounter people where they live and work; that is important.

This is very important to me: please, always forgive. And forgive everything. Forgive everything and always. I would say to priests, do not ask too many questions in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but listen and forgive. A Cardinal – who is a bit conservative, a bit narrow-minded, but he is a great priest – said in a talk to priests: “When people start to stammer [in Confession] because they are ashamed, I say, ‘It’s OK, I understand, move on to something else’. In reality, I have not understood anything, but the Lord has understood”. Please do not torture people in the confessional, asking where, how, when, with whom... Always forgive, always forgive! There is a good Capuchin friar in Buenos Aires whom I made a Cardinal at the age of ninety-six. He always has a long queue of people because he is a good confessor. I used to go to him, too. This confessor once said to me: “Listen, sometimes I get scrupulous about forgiving too much”. – “And what do you do?” – “I go pray and I say: ‘Lord, forgive me, I have forgiven too much’. And then immediately I say: ‘But you were the one who gave me this bad example!’” Always forgive. Forgive everything. I also say this to religious: forgive and forget if someone has done you harm, if there are disagreements stemming from ambition in the community... Forgive. The Lord has given us an example: forgive everything and always! I will make a confession: I have been a priest for fifty-five years, the anniversary was the other day. I have never refused absolution, and I really like to hear confessions. I have always looked for ways to forgive. This is my testimony.

MESSAGE TO THE THIRD EDITION OF “LABORDI” (ACLI)*

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 17 December 2024

Listening to the cry of the earth, of the air, of water, which a flawed model of development has hurt so much, I understood better a reality that today I want to share with you: in creation, “everything is connected” (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 117; 138). This is why the contribution of each one of you can improve the

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2024/documents/20241217-messaggio-labor-di.html>

world. The newness of each person affects everyone. The world of work is a human world, in which everyone is connected to everyone. And, unfortunately, this “world” is also contaminated by negative dynamics and behaviour that sometimes make it unliveable. Alongside care for creation, care for the quality of human life, the pursuit of human fraternity and social friendship are necessary, because our connections count more than numbers and performance. This, too, makes a difference in the world of work. And you, as you approach it, it is important that you hold firm your uniqueness - which is independent of any success or failure - and the propensity to establish sincere relationships with others. In many circles you will then be a gentle revolution.

TO THE DELEGATION FROM THE WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL*

Monday, 16 December 2024

Opening ourselves to one another has brought us closer and made us realize that reconciliation is a task of the heart, a task of the *heart* rather than the mind. When the Heart of the Lord Jesus touches our hearts, he transforms us. This is how our communities will be able to unite their differing minds and wills in order to let themselves be guided by the Spirit as brothers and sisters. This is a journey that takes time, but we must continue along that path, always focussed on the Heart of Christ, because it is from that Heart that we learn to relate well to one another and to serve God’s kingdom (cf. Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos*, 28).

Next year, Christians around the world will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council: Nicaea. This occasion reminds us that we profess the same faith, and thus have the same responsibility of offering signs of hope that bear witness to God’s presence in the world. Indeed, this is “a summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of finding ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus ‘that they may all be one’.” (*Spes Non Confundit*, 17). I am reminded of something that the great Orthodox Bishop Zizioulas used to say, namely that he already knew the date of unity: it would be the day after the final judgement! Yet, in the meantime, we must journey together, as brothers and sisters, pray together, do charitable works together, and move forward together in dialogue. Zizioulas was great!

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241216-consiglio-metodista.html>

I thank the pastors and theologians who have served on the International Joint Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Catholic Church, and I encourage the current members to continue in those same efforts.

**TO THE EMPLOYEES OF VATICAN CITY STATE FOR THE EXCHANGE
OF CHRISTMAS GREETINGS***

Audience Hall, 21 December 2024

Dear friends, thank you for this meeting, and for everything you do. I wish you all the best for Holy Christmas and for the year that is about to begin: the Holy Year of Hope. Hope grows in the family too! I bless you and I ask you, do not forget to pray for me. And if someone has some special difficulty, please talk about it, tell the heads, because we want to solve all difficulties, and this is done through dialogue, it is done with dialogue, not with shouting and not with keeping quiet. There must be dialogue, always! “Mr. Manager, Cardinal, Pope, Father... I have these difficulties. Can you help me resolve them?”. And we will try to resolve the difficulties together. Thank you, thank you very much, and merry Christmas.

**HOMÉLIE POUR LES PREMIERS VÉPRES DE LA SOLENNITÉ DE MARIE MÈRE
DE DIEU ET *TE DEUM* D’ACTION DE GRÂCE POUR L’ANNÉE ÉCOULÉE**

Basilique Saint-Pierre, 31 décembre 2024

[...]. Le thème du Jubilé, «Pèlerins d’espérance», est riche de sens, en fonction des différentes perspectives possibles, qui sont autant de «chemins» de pèlerinage. Et un de ces grands chemins d’espérance sur lequel marcher est la fraternité: c’est le chemin que j’ai proposé dans l’Encyclique *Fratelli tutti*. Oui, l’espérance du monde réside dans la fraternité ! Et il est beau de penser que notre Ville, au cours des derniers mois, est devenue un chantier pour cette finalité, avec ce sens global : se préparer et accueillir des hommes et des femmes du monde entier ; catholiques

* <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/december/documents/20241221-dipendenti-scv.html>

et chrétiens d'autres confessions, à la recherche de vérité, de liberté, de justice et de paix, tous pèlerins d'espérance et de fraternité.

Mais nous devons nous demander : cette perspective a-t-elle un fondement ? L'espérance de cette humanité fraternelle est-elle uniquement un slogan rhétorique ou possède-t-elle une base « rocheuse » sur laquelle il est possible de construire quelque chose de stable et durable ?

La Sainte Marie mère de Dieu nous donne la réponse en nous montrant Jésus. L'espérance d'un monde fraternel n'est pas une idéologie, n'est pas un système économique, n'est pas le progrès technique. L'espérance d'un monde fraternel, c'est Lui, le Fils incarné, envoyé par le Père pour que nous puissions tous devenir ce que nous sommes, c'est-à-dire fils du Père qui est aux cieux, et donc frères et sœurs les uns les autres.

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