

*The 'incarnate arms' of Mother Church are indeed universal, astute and wonderfully vigilant!*

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**Francis in the Pontifical Academy of Sciences emphasizes the responsibility of humanity in creation**

Vatican City, 27 October 2014 (VIS) – This morning the Holy Father attended the plenary session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences held in the Casina Pio IV, during which he inaugurated a bust of Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, whom he described as “a great Pope. Great for the strength and penetration of his intelligence, great for his important contribution to theology, great for his love of the Church and of human beings, great for his virtue and religiosity”. He recalled that Benedict XVI was the first to invite a president of this Academy to participate in the Synod on new evangelisation, “aware of the importance of science in modern culture”.

Pope Francis chose not to focus on the complex issue of the evolution of nature, the theme the Academy will consider during this session, emphasising however that “God and Christ walk with us and are also present in nature”. “When we read in Genesis the account of Creation, we risk imagining God as a magus, with a magic wand able to make everything. But it is not so. He created beings and allowed them to develop according to the internal laws that He gave to each one, so that they were able to develop and to arrive at their fullness of being. He gave autonomy to the beings of the Universe at the same time at which he assured them of his continuous presence, giving being to every reality. And so creation continued for centuries and centuries, millennia and millennia, until it became which we know today, precisely because God is not a demiurge or a conjurer, but the Creator who gives being to all things. The beginning of the world is not the work of chaos that owes its origin to another, but derives directly from a supreme Origin that creates out of love. The Big Bang, which nowadays is posited as the origin of the world, does not contradict the divine act of creating, but rather requires it. The evolution of nature does not contrast with the notion of Creation, as evolution presupposes the creation of beings that evolve”.

He continued, “With regard to man, instead, there is a change and something new. When, on the sixth day of the account in Genesis, man is created, God gives the human being another autonomy, an autonomy that is different to that of nature, which is freedom. And he tells man to name everything and to go ahead through history. This makes him responsible for creation, so that he might dominate it in order to develop it until the end of time. Therefore the scientist, and above all the Christian scientist, must adopt the approach of posing questions regarding the future of humanity and of the earth, and, of

being free and responsible, helping to prepare it and preserve it, to eliminate risks to the environment of both a natural and human nature. But, at the same time, the scientist must be motivated by the confidence that nature hides, in her evolutionary mechanisms, potentialities for intelligence and freedom to discover and realise, to achieve the development that is in the plan of the Creator. So, while limited, the action of humanity is part of God's power and is able to build a world suited to his dual corporal and spiritual life; to build a human world for all human beings and not for a group or a class of privileged persons. This hope and trust in God, the Creator of nature, and in the capacity of the human spirit can offer the researcher a new energy and profound serenity. But it is also true that the action of humanity – when freedom becomes autonomy – which is not freedom, but autonomy – destroys creation and man takes the place of the Creator. And this is the grave sin against God the Creator”, he concluded.

### **THERE IS NO PLACE IN THE CHURCH FOR ABUSERS**

Vatican City, 7 July 2014 (VIS) – The following is the full text of the homily pronounced this morning by Pope Francis during the Mass celebrated in the Sanctae Marthae Chapel, attended by six victims of sexual abuse by members of the clergy.

“The scene where Peter sees Jesus emerge after a terrible interrogation... Peter whose eyes meet the gaze of Jesus and weeps... This scene comes to my mind as I look at you, and think of so many men and women, boys and girls. I feel the gaze of Jesus and I ask for the grace to weep, the grace for the Church to weep and make reparation for her sons and daughters who betrayed their mission, who abused innocent persons. Today, I am very grateful to you for having travelled so far to come here.

“For some time now I have felt in my heart deep pain and suffering. So much time hidden, camouflaged with a complicity that cannot be explained until someone realised that Jesus was looking and others the same ... and they set about to sustain that gaze.

“And those few who began to weep have touched our conscience for this crime and grave sin. This is what causes me distress and pain at the fact that some priests and bishops, by sexually abusing minors, violated their innocence and their own priestly vocation. It is something more than despicable actions. It is like a sacrilegious cult, because these boys and girls had been entrusted to the priestly charism in order to be brought to God. And those people sacrificed them to the idol of their own concupiscence. They profane the very image of God in whose likeness we were created. Childhood, as we all know, young hearts, so open and trusting, have their own way of understanding the mysteries of God's love and are eager to grow in the faith. Today the heart of the Church looks into the eyes of Jesus in these boys and girls and wants to weep; she asks the grace to weep before the execrable acts of abuse which have left life long scars.

“I know that these wounds are a source of deep and often unrelenting emotional and spiritual pain, and even despair. Many of those who have suffered in this way have also

sought relief in the path of addiction. Others have experienced difficulties in significant relationships, with parents, spouses and children. Suffering in families has been especially grave, since the damage provoked by abuse affects these vital family relationships.

“Some have even had to deal with the terrible tragedy of the death of a loved one by suicide. The deaths of these so beloved children of God weigh upon the heart and my conscience and that of the whole Church. To these families I express my heartfelt love and sorrow. Jesus, tortured and interrogated with passionate hatred, is taken to another place and he looks out. He looks out upon one of his own torturers, the one who denied him, and he makes him weep. Let us implore this grace together with that of making amends.

“Sins of clerical sexual abuse against minors have a toxic effect on faith and hope in God. Some of you have held fast to faith, while for others the experience of betrayal and abandonment has led to a weakening of faith in God. Your presence here speaks of the miracle of hope, which prevails against the deepest darkness. Surely it is a sign of God’s mercy that today we have this opportunity to encounter one another, to adore God, to look in one another’s eyes and seek the grace of reconciliation.

“Before God and his people I express my sorrow for the sins and grave crimes of clerical sexual abuse committed against you. And I humbly ask forgiveness.

“I beg your forgiveness, too, for the sins of omission on the part of Church leaders who did not respond adequately to reports of abuse made by family members, as well as by abuse victims themselves. This led to even greater suffering on the part of those who were abused and it endangered other minors who were at risk.

“On the other hand, the courage that you and others have shown by speaking up, by telling the truth, was a service of love, since for us it shed light on a terrible darkness in the life of the Church. There is no place in the Church’s ministry for those who commit these abuses, and I commit myself not to tolerate harm done to a minor by any individual, whether a cleric or not. All bishops must carry out their pastoral ministry with the utmost care in order to help foster the protection of minors, and they will be held accountable.

“What Jesus says about those who cause scandal applies to all of us: the millstone and the sea.

“By the same token we will continue to exercise vigilance in priestly formation. I am counting on the members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, all minors, whatever religion they belong to, for they are little flowers which God looks lovingly upon.

“I ask this support so as to help me ensure that we develop better policies and procedures in the universal Church for the protection of minors and for the training of church

personnel in implementing those policies and procedures. We need to do everything in our power to ensure that these sins have no place in the Church.

“Dear brothers and sisters, because we are all members of God’s family, we are called to live lives shaped by mercy. The Lord Jesus, our Saviour, is the supreme example of this; though innocent, he took our sins upon himself on the cross. To be reconciled is the very essence of our shared identity as followers of Jesus Christ. By turning back to him, accompanied by our most holy Mother, who stood sorrowing at the foot of the cross, let us seek the grace of reconciliation with the entire people of God. The loving intercession of Our Lady of Tender Mercy is an unfailing source of help in the process of our healing.

“You and all those who were abused by clergy are loved by God. I pray that the remnants of the darkness which touched you may be healed by the embrace of the Child Jesus and that the harm which was done to you will give way to renewed faith and joy.

“I am grateful for this meeting. And please pray for me, so that the eyes of my heart will always clearly see the path of merciful love, and that God will grant me the courage to persevere on this path for the good of all children and young people. Jesus comes forth from an unjust trial, from a cruel interrogation and he looks in the eyes of Peter, and Peter weeps. We ask that he look at us and that we allow ourselves to be looked upon and to weep and that he give us the grace to be ashamed, so that, like Peter, forty days later, we can reply: 'You know that I love you'; and hear him say: 'go back and feed my sheep' – and I would add – 'let no wolf enter the fold’”.

**“It seems that in this sequence of three popes, we see the Church that wishes to take Christ “to the peripheries,” to use the language of Pope Francis. John Paul II had to face geopolitical peripheries: the division of the world into the east and the west, regimes versus democracy, militant atheism versus Christian tradition. Pope Benedict was taking the Gospel to the intellectual peripheries of the world: the challenges of secular culture, atheism in its new forms, relativism. Pope Francis continues to follow this path of evangelizing the existential peripheries: poor people immigrants, people who are marginalized.**

**With all certainty, there is continuity, the continuity of Christ’s love, which manifests itself through Peter’s service.”**

**Msgr. Slawomir Oder, Postulator of the Cause of Canonization of St. John Paul II  
Columbia (Knights of Columbus) April 2014**

## **JOHN XXIII AND JOHN PAUL II INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK OF SAINTS**

Vatican City, 27 April 2014 (VIS) – Half a million people attended the ceremony held this morning in St. Peter’s Square for the canonisation of the “two Pope saints”: John XXIII and John Paul II. Since it was opened to the public at 5 a.m., the square and its environs were filled with faithful from all over the world; Polish pilgrims, however, constituted one of the

largest groups. The event was also attended by delegations from over a hundred countries, more than twenty Heads of State and many figures from the world of politics and culture, including the King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain, King Albert II and Queen Paola of Belgium, Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, the ex-president of the Republic of Poland Lech Walesa, the president of the Argentine parliament Julian Dominguez and the presidents of the European Union, Herman Van Rompuy, and the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso. The celebration was also attended by Floribeth Mora Diaz and Sister Adele Labianca, the carer of Caterina Capitani – the two women who experienced the miracles attributed to John Paul II.

Banners with portraits of the two saints – the same ones used for their respective beatifications – were displayed on the facade of the Basilica. In the square, adorned with more than 30,000 roses from Ecuador, and in Via della Conciliazione, hundreds of thousands of faithful prepared for the celebration by reciting the chaplet of Divine Mercy, intercalated with texts from the magisterium of both pontiffs and preceded by the Hymn to Blessed John XXIII, “Good Shepherd of Christ's flock”. The prayer ended with the Hymn to Blessed John Paul II, “Open the doors to Christ”.

Under intermittent rain, and during litanies invoking the protection of the saints, there began the procession of concelebrating cardinals and bishops who, before taking their places, greeted Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, who also concelebrated alongside the Holy Father. A few minutes after 10 a.m., Pope Francis entered the square and, before proceeding with the rite for the proclamation of the new saints, greeted and embraced the Pope emeritus.

Moments later Cardinal Angelo Amato S.D.B., prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, accompanied by the postulators, asked Pope Francis to inscribe the names of the two Blessed Popes in the Book of Saints, and the Holy Father pronounced the formula for canonisation:

“For the honour of the Blessed Trinity, the exaltation of the Catholic faith and the increase of the Christian life, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and own own, after due deliberation and frequent prayer for divine assistance, and having sought the counsel of many of our brother Bishops, we declare and define Blessed

John XXIII

John Paul II

be Saints and we enrol them among the Saints, decreeing that they are to be venerated as such by the whole Church.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen”.

This was followed by the presentation to the Pope of the relics of the two saints, which were

displayed on the altar throughout the ceremony; these were a phial of the blood of John Paul II, which had been displayed on 1 May 2011, and a piece of skin removed from the body of John XXIII when it was exhumed for his beatification on 3 September 2000.

Following the Gospel reading, the Holy Father pronounced a homily in which he defined St. John XXIII as “the Pope of openness to the Holy Spirit”, and St. John Paul II as “the Pope of the Family”, recalling that “at the heart of this Sunday, which concludes the Octave of Easter and which John Paul II wished to dedicate to Divine Mercy, are the glorious wounds of the risen Jesus”.

“He had already shown those wounds when he first appeared to the Apostles on the very evening of that day following the Sabbath, the day of the resurrection”, he continued. “But Thomas was not there that evening, and when the others told him that they had seen the Lord, he replied that unless he himself saw and touched those wounds, he would not believe. A week later, Jesus appeared once more to the disciples gathered in the Upper Room, and Thomas was present; Jesus turned to him and told him to touch his wounds. Whereupon that man, so straightforward and accustomed to testing everything personally, knelt before Jesus with the words: 'My Lord and my God!'.

“The wounds of Jesus are a scandal, a stumbling block for faith, yet they are also the test of faith. That is why on the body of the risen Christ the wounds never pass away: they remain, for those wounds are the enduring sign of God’s love for us. They are essential for believing in God. Not for believing that God exists, but for believing that God is love, mercy and faithfulness. Saint Peter, quoting Isaiah, writes to Christians: 'by his wounds you have been healed'.

“John XXIII and John Paul II were not afraid to look upon the wounds of Jesus, to touch his torn hands and his pierced side”, exclaimed Pope Francis. “They were not ashamed of the flesh of Christ, they were not scandalised by him, by his cross; they did not despise the flesh of their brother, because they saw Jesus in every person who suffers and struggles. These were two men of courage, filled with the parrhesia of the Holy Spirit, and they bore witness before the Church and the world to God’s goodness and mercy.

“They were priests, bishops and popes of the twentieth century. They lived through the tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful; faith was more powerful – faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of man and the Lord of history; the mercy of God, shown by those five wounds, was more powerful; and more powerful too was the closeness of Mary our Mother.

“In these two men, who looked upon the wounds of Christ and bore witness to his mercy, there dwelt a living hope and an indescribable and glorious joy. The hope and the joy which the risen Christ bestows on his disciples, the hope and the joy which nothing and no one can take from them. The hope and joy of Easter, forged in the crucible of self-denial, self-emptying, utter identification with sinners, even to the point of disgust at the bitterness of that chalice. Such were the hope and the joy which these two holy popes had received as a gift from the risen Lord and which they in turn bestowed in abundance upon the People of God,

meriting our eternal gratitude.

“This hope and this joy were palpable in the earliest community of believers, in Jerusalem, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. It was a community which lived the heart of the Gospel, love and mercy, in simplicity and fraternity.

“This is also the image of the Church which the Second Vatican Council set before us. John XXIII and John Paul II cooperated with the Holy Spirit in renewing and updating the Church in keeping with her pristine features, those features which the saints have given her throughout the centuries. Let us not forget that it is the saints who give direction and growth to the Church. In convening the Council, John XXIII showed an exquisite openness to the Holy Spirit. He let himself be led and he was for the Church a pastor, a servant-leader. This was his great service to the Church; he was the pope of openness to the Spirit.

“In his own service to the People of God, John Paul II was the pope of the family. He himself once said that he wanted to be remembered as the pope of the family. I am particularly happy to point this out as we are in the process of journeying with families towards the Synod on the family. It is surely a journey which, from his place in heaven, he guides and sustains”.

The Holy Father concluded. “May these two new saints and shepherds of God’s people intercede for the Church, so that during this two-year journey toward the Synod she may be open to the Holy Spirit in pastoral service to the family. May both of them teach us not to be scandalised by the wounds of Christ and to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of divine mercy, which always hopes and always forgives, because it always loves”.

St. Peter's Basilica will remain open today from 2 to 10 p.m., to enable pilgrims to venerate the bodies of the two canonised Popes displayed in glass cases, to which the word “Saint” has been added.

## **THE VOICE OF POPES: DIGITISING THE VATICAN RADIO ARCHIVE**

Vatican City, 27 March 2014 (VIS) – On Tuesday, 1 April, in Vatican Radio's Sala Marconi, there will be a presentation of “The Voice of the Popes”, Vatican Radio's digital archive which brings together the voices of the popes who have succeeded to the see of St. Peter since 1931, the year in which the pontifical broadcasting entity was founded, from Pius XI to Francis. The institutional tasks of Vatican Radio are to consult, preserve and manage the papal audio archive ensuring that, in the case of use by third parties, the pastoral character of the material is conserved and intellectual property rights are protected.

The digitisation of the archive, which will take place in conjunction with the canonisation of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II on 27 April, will guarantee the conservation of the

audio material, whose integrity may be endangered by wear and tear of archive supports, and will allow the archiving of audio material and text (metadata) in a far more efficient and rational way. The new digital support will also ensure easier use of content by information workers and scholars.

“The Vatican Radio technical directorate has completed the digitisation of the pontifical audio archive, reproducing the content of the 8000 tapes and original supports documenting the activities of popes, from Pius XI up to Francis, including Popes John XXIII and John Paul II, who will soon be canonised”.

Speakers at the press conference for the presentation of “The Voices of the Popes”, moderated by Fr. Federico Lombardi S.J., director general of Vatican Radio, were: Cardinal Giovan Battista Re, prefect emeritus of the Congregation for Bishops and president emeritus of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, Vatican specialist Gian Franco Svidercoschi, and Guido Gusso, Pope John XXIII's valet and Dean of the Hall of the Papal Antechamber under Pope John Paul II. The digitisation of the archive was undertaken with the contribution of the Banca Intesa Russia and with the support of Confartigianato Persone.

### **THIRTY YEARS OF THE VATICAN MUSEUMS' "PATRONS OF THE ARTS"**

Vatican City, 8 October 2013 (VIS) – The Vatican Museums will hold a series of initiatives and events from 15 to 20 October 2013 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Patrons of the Arts, an international community of benefactors who for three decades have “adopted” and provided valuable economic support for the conservation, restoration and appreciation of the treasures conserved in the Vatican Museums.

The history of the Patrons began in 1982, when the Holy See promoted, throughout the United States, the itinerant exhibition, “The Vatican Collections: the Papacy and Art”. This great overseas event led first to the creation of “The Friends of the Vatican Museums” and then the institution of the Patrons of the Arts at the behest of Cardinal Rosalio José Castillo Lara, now co-ordinated by Fr. Mark Haydu.

The Patrons of the Arts finance, above all, the “extraordinary” maintenance of the papal collections, and over the years, they have made possible the restoration of the “Stories of the Life of Christ and Moses” in the Sistine Chapel, the Pauline and Nicolene Chapels, the fifteenth-century Papal Apartments of Pope Alexander IV Borgia, the Scala Sancta, the and the “Galera” Fountain in the Vatican Gardens. They have also financed the restoration of the Santa Rosa Necropolis and the Matisse Room within the Vatican Museums.

The Patrons do not limit their attention only to famous works of art; they also finance “minor” projects, which allow restorers the opportunity to carefully examine works and to accompany their restoration with detailed research, leading at times to important historical and scientific discoveries that may be shared with the international art world at large. Indeed, the occupational implications of the “adoptive” conservational projects assume particular importance in periods of economic crisis. The

numerous restoration workshops established with the support of the Patrons have ensured work for many young experts in the restoration and conservation of artistic heritage.

## **MOTHER CHURCH NEVER CLOSES THE DOOR TO ANY OF HER CHILDREN**

Vatican City, 18 September 2013 (VIS) – The Church as mother was again the theme chosen by Francis for today's catechesis at the Wednesday general audience. “I like this image a lot, as it seems to me that it tells us not only how the Church is, but also shows us the face the Church, this Church of ours, should increasingly show”, he explained.

The Pope began by considering what a mother does for her children. First of all, “she teaches us how to proceed in life ... she orientates us, she always tries to show us the right path in life in order to grow and become adults. And she does this with tenderness, with affection, with love, always – even when she tries to correct our path because we lose our way a little or take routes that might lead us to a fall”.

“The Church does likewise: she orientates our lives, she offers us instruction on how to walk in the right way. Think of the ten Commandments: they show us the route to follow if we are to mature, fixing certain cardinal points in our behaviour. And these are the fruits of tenderness, of the very love that God gives us. You might say to me: but these are commandments! They are a list of negatives! I would like to invite you to read them, ... and then think about them positively. You will see that they concern our way of behaving towards God, towards ourselves and towards others, just as a mother teaches us how to live well. They remind us not to make material idols for ourselves, which then turn us into slaves; to remember God; to respect our parents; to be honest; to respect others ... Try to see them in this way and consider them as if they were the words and teachings a mother gives us in order to take a good path through life. A mother never teaches anything that is bad, she wants only what is best for her children, and the same is true of the Church”.

Secondly, “when a child grows and becomes an adult ... and assumes his responsibilities ... he does what he wants, and at times, he may happen to stray away from the path. ... A mother always, in every situation, has the patience to continue to accompany her children. She is animated by the strength of love ... and even when [her children] make mistakes, she always finds a way of understanding them ... to help them. We say that a mother 'stands up and is counted' for her own children; that is, she always seeks to defend them”.

“The Church is the same: she is a merciful mother who understands, who always tries to help, to give encouragement even when her children have made mistakes or continue to do so. She never closes the doors of her house to them: she does not judge, but rather offers God's forgiveness, she offers her love to invite her children to return to the right path and even when they have fallen into the deepest abyss, the Church is not afraid to enter into their darkest night with them in order to give them hope; the Church is not afraid to enter into our night when our soul and conscience are surrounded by darkness, to give us hope! Because the Church is our mother!”

Finally, “a mother also knows how to ask, to knock on every door for her children, without calculation but with love. And I think of how mothers know, most of all, how to knock on God's door! Mothers pray a lot for their own children, especially for those ... most in need, whose lives have taken

dangerous or mistaken paths. ... The Church does likewise: through prayer, she places the lives of all her children in the hands of the Lord. Let us trust in the strength of prayer of the Mother Church: the Lord never remains indifferent. He always knows how to astonish us when we least expect it. The Mother Church knows this!"

“So, these are the thoughts I wanted to share with you today: we see in the Church a good mother who shows us the path to walk in life, who is always patient, merciful and understanding, and knows how to place us in God's hands”.

### **PRESENTATION OF PONTIFICAL YEARBOOK 2013**

Vatican City, 13 May 2013 (VIS) – This morning, Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone S.D.B., and Archbishop Angelo Becciu, substitute for General Affairs, presented the Holy Father with the 2013 edition of the "Annuario Pontificio" (Pontifical Yearbook, the Holy See's annual directory), in the presence of the officials responsible for compiling and printing the volumes. The "Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae" (the Church's Statistical Yearbook), which the same dicastery is also responsible for, was also presented.

A reading of the information given shows some changes relative to the life of the Catholic Church in the world from 2012 to the election of Pope Francis.

In that period, it is noteworthy that there were erected: 11 new episcopal Sees; two personal ordinariates; one apostolic vicariate; and one apostolic prefecture. Also, one territorial prelature was elevated to the rank of diocese and two apostolic exarchates were elevated to the rank of eparchies.

The statistical information, which refers to the year 2011, reveals details about the Catholic Church in the 2,979 ecclesiastical circumscriptions around the planet. The number of Catholics in the world increased from 1.196 million in 2010 to 1.214 million in 2011, an increase of eighteen million faithful, corresponding to a growth of 1.5%. Over the last three years the presence of baptized Catholics in the world has remained stable at around 17.5%.

The number of Catholics with respect to the total population varies considerably between the continents. Their numbers have increased in Africa (by 4.3%), which has reported a 2.3% increase of its population between 2010 and 2011. In Asia, an increase in Catholics greater to an increase in the population was also recorded (of 2% compared to 1.2%). In the Americas and in Europe the increase in numbers of Catholics is equal to the population increase (.3%). In 2011, the total of baptized Catholics had a distribution of, by continent: the Americas (48.8%); Europe (23.5%); Africa (16%); Asia (10.9%); and Oceania (.8%).

From 2010 to 2011, the number of bishops increased from 5,104 to 5,132, a relative increase of .55%. The increase mainly involved Oceania (+4.6%) and Africa (+1%) while Asia and Europe are slightly below the world average and no variation is seen in the Americas.

The steady increase in the number of priests which began in the year 2000 has continued. On 31 December 2011, their numbers stood at 413,418 compared to last year's 412,236. Nevertheless, this was not homogeneous growth. In Africa and Asia the increase was, respectively, +39.5% and +32% (with an increase of more than 3,000 in 2011 alone). In the Americas the situation is stationary (122,000 priests) while, over the last decade, Europe has seen a decrease of more than 9%.

The number of permanent deacons registered a strong increase: from 29,000 in 2001 to 41,000 in 2011. Those present in North America and Europe count for 97.4% of the total.

The number of non-ordained male religious increased, slightly surpassing 55,000. Their numbers are increasing in Africa and Asia (+18.5% and +44.9% respectively) and decreasing in the Americas (-3.6%), in Europe (-18%), and in Oceania (-21.9%).

There is a strong decrease in the number of female religious, which currently registers 713,000 members in contrast to 792,000 in 2001. There are fewer female religious in Europe (-22%), Oceania (-21%), and the Americas (-17%). Nevertheless there is significant growth in their numbers in Africa (+28%) and in Asia (18%).

Candidates for the priesthood, diocesan and religious, have increased since 2001 (112,244) by 7.5%. In 2011 there were 120,616 registered. The strongest increase in seminarians was in Africa (+30.9%), and Asia (+29.4%), while Europe and the Americas registered a decrease in their numbers of 21.7% and 1.9% respectively.

### **BENEDICT XVI'S FINAL GENERAL AUDIENCE: "I ASKED GOD TO ENLIGHTEN ME TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION, NOT FOR MY OWN GOOD, BUT FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH."**

**Vatican City, 27 February 2013 (VIS)** – Today, Benedict XVI celebrated his last general audience. In St. Peter's Square, crowded with tens of thousands of people wishing to bid him farewell, the Pontiff said: "Thank you for coming in such large numbers to this, my last general audience. Thank you, I am truly moved! And I see the Church is alive! I think we also have to thank the Creator for the beautiful weather that He is giving us now, even in winter."

Following is the entire text of the Holy Father's words.

"Like the Apostle Paul in the Biblical text that we have heard, I feel in my heart that I have to especially thank God who guides and builds up the Church, who plants His Word and thus nourishes the faith in His People. At this moment my heart expands and embraces the whole Church throughout the world and I thank God for the 'news' that, in these years of my Petrine ministry, I have received about the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for the love that truly circulates in the Body of the Church, making it to live in the love and the hope that opens us to and guides us towards the fullness of life, towards our heavenly homeland."

"I feel that I am carrying everyone with me in prayer in this God-given moment when I am collecting

every meeting, every trip, every pastoral visit. I am gathering everyone and everything in prayer to entrust it to the Lord: so that we may be filled with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding in order to live in a manner worthy of the Lord and His love, bearing fruit in every good work (cf. Col 1:9-10).”

“At this moment I have great confidence because I know, we all know, that the Gospel's Word of truth is the strength of the Church; it is her life. The Gospel purifies and renews, bearing fruit, wherever the community of believers hears it and welcomes God's grace in truth and in love. This is my confidence, this is my joy.”

“When, on 19 April almost eight years ago I accepted to take on the Petrine ministry, I had the firm certainty that has always accompanied me: this certainty for the life of the Church from the Word of God. At that moment, as I have already expressed many times, the words that resounded in my heart were: Lord, what do You ask of me? It is a great weight that You are placing on my shoulders but, if You ask it of me, I will cast my nets at your command, confident that You will guide me, even with all my weaknesses. And eight years later I can say that the Lord has guided me. He has been close to me. I have felt His presence every day. It has been a stretch of the Church's path that has had moments of joy and light, but also difficult moments. I felt like St. Peter and the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Lord has given us many days of sunshine and light breezes, days when the fishing was plentiful, but also times when the water was rough and the winds against us, just as throughout the whole history of the Church, when the Lord seemed to be sleeping. But I always knew that the Lord is in that boat and I always knew that the boat of the Church is not mine, not ours, but is His. And the Lord will not let it sink. He is the one who steers her, of course also through those He has chosen because that is how He wanted it. This was and is a certainty that nothing can tarnish. And that is why my heart today is filled with gratitude to God, because He never left—the whole Church or me—without His consolation, His light, or His love.”

“We are in the Year of Faith, which I desired precisely in order to strengthen our faith in God in a context that seems to relegate it more and more to the background. I would like to invite everyone to renew their firm trust in the Lord, to entrust ourselves like children to God's arms, certain that those arms always hold us up and are what allow us to walk forward each day, even when it is a struggle. I would like everyone to feel beloved of that God who gave His Son for us and who has shown us His boundless love. I would like everyone to feel the joy of being Christian. In a beautiful prayer, which can be recited every morning, say: 'I adore you, my God and I love you with all my heart. Thank you for having created me, for having made me Christian...' Yes, we are happy for the gift of faith. It is the most precious thing, which no one can take from us! Let us thank the Lord for this every day, with prayer and with a coherent Christian life. God loves us, but awaits us to also love Him!”

“It is not only God who I wish to thank at this time. A pope is not alone in guiding Peter's barque, even if it is his primary responsibility. I have never felt alone in bearing the joy and the weight of the Petrine ministry. The Lord has placed at my side so many people who, with generosity and love for God and the Church, have helped me and been close to me. First of all, you, dear Brother Cardinals: your wisdom, your advice, and your friendship have been precious to me. My collaborators, starting with my secretary of state who has accompanied me faithfully over the years; the Secretariat of State and the whole of the Roman Curia, as well as all those who, in their various areas, serve the Holy See. There are many faces that are never seen, remaining in obscurity, but precisely in their silence, in their

daily dedication in a spirit of faith and humility, they were a sure and reliable support to me. A special thought goes to the Church of Rome, my diocese! I cannot forget my Brothers in the episcopate and in the priesthood, consecrated persons, and the entire People of God. In my pastoral visits, meetings, audiences, and trips I always felt great care and deep affection, but I have also loved each and every one of you, without exception, with that pastoral love that is the heart of every pastor, especially the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of the Apostle Peter. Every day I held each of you in prayer, with a father's heart."

"I wish to send my greetings and my thanks to all: a pope's heart extends to the whole world. And I would like to express my gratitude to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, which makes the great family of Nations present here. Here I am also thinking of all those who work for good communication and I thank them for their important service."

"At this point I would also like to wholeheartedly thank all of the many people around the world who, in recent weeks, have sent me touching tokens of concern, friendship, and prayer. Yes, the Pope is never alone. I feel this again now in such a great way that it touches my heart. The Pope belongs to everyone and many people feel very close to him. It's true that I receive letters from the world's notables—from heads of states, from religious leaders, from representatives of the world of culture, etc. But I also receive many letters from ordinary people who write to me simply from their hearts and make me feel their affection, which is born of our being together with Christ Jesus, in the Church. These people do not write to me the way one would write, for example, to a prince or a dignitary that they don't know. They write to me as brothers and sisters or as sons and daughters, with the sense of a very affectionate family tie. In this you can touch what the Church is—not an organization, not an association for religious or humanitarian ends, but a living body, a communion of brothers and sisters in the Body of Jesus Christ who unites us all. Experiencing the Church in this way and being able to almost touch with our hands the strength of His truth and His love is a reason for joy at a time when many are speaking of its decline. See how the Church is alive today!"

"In these last months I have felt that my strength had diminished and I asked God earnestly in prayer to enlighten me with His light to make me make the right decision, not for my own good, but for the good of the Church. I have taken this step in full awareness of its seriousness and also its newness, but with a profound peace of mind. Loving the Church also means having the courage to make difficult, agonized choices, always keeping in mind the good of the Church, not of oneself."

"Allow me here to return once again to 19 April, 2005. The gravity of the decision lay precisely in the fact that, from that moment on, I was always and for always engaged by the Lord. Always—whoever assumes the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy. He belongs always and entirely to everyone, to the whole Church. His life, so to speak, is totally deprived of its private dimension. I experienced, and I am experiencing it precisely now, that one receives life precisely when they give it. Before I said that many people who love the Lord also love St. Peter's Successor and are fond of him; that the Pope truly has brothers and sisters, sons and daughters all over the world and that he feels safe in the embrace of their communion; because he no longer belongs to himself but he belongs to all and all belong to him."

"'Always' is also 'forever'--there is no return to private life. My decision to renounce the active exercise of the ministry does not revoke this. I am not returning to private life, to a life of trips,

meetings, receptions, conferences, etc. I am not abandoning the cross, but am remaining beside the Crucified Lord in a new way. I no longer bear the power of the office for the governance of the Church, but I remain in the service of prayer, within St. Peter's paddock, so to speak. St. Benedict, whose name I bear as Pope, will be a great example to me in this. He has shown us the way for a life that, active or passive, belongs wholly to God's work."

"I also thank each and every one of you for the respect and understanding with which you have received this important decision. I will continue to accompany the Church's journey through prayer and reflection, with the dedication to the Lord and His Bride that I have tried to live every day up to now and that I want to always live. I ask you to remember me to God, and above all to pray for the Cardinals who are called to such an important task, and for the new Successor of the Apostle Peter. Many the Lord accompany him with the light and strength of His Spirit."

"We call upon the maternal intercession of Mary, the Mother of God and of the Church, that she might accompany each of us and the entire ecclesial community. We entrust ourselves to her with deep confidence."

"Dear friends! God guides His Church, always sustaining her even and especially in difficult times. Let us never lose this vision of faith, which is the only true vision of the path of the Church and of the world. In our hearts, in the heart of each one of you, may there always be the joyous certainty that the Lord is beside us, that He does not abandon us, that He is near and embraces us with His love. Thank you."

## **BENEDICT XVI WILL BE POPE EMERITUS**

Vatican City, 26 February 2013 (VIS) – Benedict XVI will be "Pontiff emeritus" or "Pope emeritus", as Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., director of the Holy See Press Office, reported in a press conference on the final days of the current pontificate. He will keep the name of "His Holiness, Benedict XVI" and will dress in a simple white cassock without the mozzetta (elbow-length cape).

More than 50,000 tickets have already been requested for the Pope's final general audience tomorrow morning, 27 February, but greater attendance is expected. Except for the trip around St. Peter's Square in the popemobile and the exclusion of the "bacciamani" (brief personal greetings that take place after the ceremony), the audience will take place as usual. On its conclusion, the Pope will go to the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Palace to meet with some of the civil authorities who are present in Rome or who have travelled here to wish him farewell. Among these dignitaries will be the presidents of Slovakia and of the German region of Bavaria.

On the morning of 28 February, the last day of his pontificate, the Pope will meet with, again in the Clementine Hall, the cardinals who are present in Rome. At 4:55pm, in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Vatican Apostolic Palace and before a detachment of the Swiss Guards, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B., secretary of State of His Holiness, and other members of that dicastery will bid him farewell. The Pope's helicopter will land at Castel Gandolfo at 5:15pm, where he will be received by

Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello and Bishop Giuseppe Sciacca, respectively president and secretary general of the Governorate of Vatican City State along with Bishop Marcello Semeraro of the Diocese of Albano, and civil authorities of the locality.

Benedict XVI will appear at the balcony of the Castel Gandolfo Apostolic Palace to greet those who have gathered in the square to wish him well. The Sede Vacante will begin at 8:00pm and the Swiss Guards assigned to him at Castel Gandolfo will take their leave, as their corps is dedicated to the safeguarding of the Roman Pontiff. Instead, the Vatican Gendarmerie will take over the Pope emeritus' safety detail.

Fr. Lombardi also explained that Benedict XVI will no longer use the "Fisherman's Ring", which will be destroyed along with the lead seal of the pontificate. This task falls to the cardinal camerlengo and his assistants. Likewise, the Press Office director announced that the Pope will no longer wear the red papal shoes.

Regarding the beginning of the Congregations of Cardinals, the dean of the College of Cardinals will send a letter to all the cardinals on 1 March, calling them to Rome. "It is likely, therefore," Fr. Lombardi added, "that the congregations will begin starting next week."

The congregations will be held in the new Synod Hall. The prelates will not be housed in the Casa Santa Marta residence until the eve of the beginning of the Conclave for various reasons, including the fact that rooms are to be assigned by lot during the congregations.

### **13-02-12 Vatican Radio**

**(Vatican Radio) Pope Benedict XVI's decision to resign is not due to ill health but the inevitable frailty that comes with aging**, Fr. Federico Lombardi reiterated Tuesday to a packed Vatican Press Office. It was a decision that the Holy Father matured over time, particularly following his trip last year to Mexico and Cuba, when he realised the physical toll of such trans-Atlantic journeys, which are part and parcel of the Pope's ministry. What's important now, he said, is that we enjoy the last great events of this pontificate.

Emer McCarthy reports:

In the second such briefing since the shock announcement Monday, the Director of the Holy See Press office convoked journalists to clarify a series of questions from the International press corps that has laid siege to the Vatican in the last 24 hours.

Fr. Lombardi began by confirming the Pope's calendar of appointments until 8pm, February 28th, the time and date indicated by the Pope for his resignation from ministry. The Pope chose this time, Lombardi told journalists, simply because it is when he usually ends his working day.

The Press Office Director confirmed Italian newspaper reports that Pope Benedict has a pacemaker, but pointed out that he has had it for 10 years, even before being elected Pope. Fr Lombardi also confirmed that Benedict XVI had a new battery installed three months ago in a routine procedure, but that his general health was normal for a man

nearing 86 years of age.

For many faithful news that Benedict XVI's highly anticipated encyclical on faith will not be published before he steps down was somewhat disappointing, but Fr. Lombardi said, in all probability it "will be published under another form".

### *So what happens next?*

Turning to what happens next the spokesman reiterated that the Conclave must begin between 15 to 20 days from the commencement of the 'Sede vacante' or Vacant See, (March 1<sup>st</sup>) and that it is not the Pope who convokes the Cardinals to Rome. He also reaffirmed that Benedict XVI will have "no role whatsoever" in the conclave or choice of his successor.

The Vatican's Office for Protocol, Lombardi revealed, is already studying the constitution and norms governing the Papacy to clarify the state and situation of Benedict XVI once he resigns. What title he will be given, his role within the Church and even the fate of the fisherman's ring and papal seal. "It's uncharted territory for us all", he said. In the meantime, he encouraged journalists not to miss the opportunity of the last great encounters of this pontificate. These include: the two general audiences, February 13 and 27; Ash Wednesday celebrations to be held this year in St Peter's Basilica rather than St Sabina on the Aventine Hill, his meeting with the priests of Rome on Thursday February 14<sup>th</sup>; the Sunday Angelus; his meeting with bishops from Italy on their Ad Limina pilgrimage and two private audiences with visiting Heads of State, from Romania and Guatemala.

Fr. Lombardi drew particular attention to the decision to move Ash Wednesday celebrations to St Peters. It was motivated by a question of space, to accommodate those wishing to attend what will be the last great liturgical celebration of Pope Benedict's pontificate.

He also revealed in his meeting with Rome's priests this Thursday Pope Benedict XVI will focus on his personal memories and experiences of Vatican II in what promises to be a touching and very personal encounter.

## **POPE RENOUNCES PAPAL THRONE**

Vatican City, 11 February 2013 (VIS) The Holy Father, at the end of today's consistory for causes for canonization, announced his resignation from ministry as Bishop of Rome to the College of Cardinals. Following is the Holy Father's complete declaration, which he read in Latin:

"I have convoked you to this Consistory, not only for the three canonizations, but also to communicate to you a decision of great importance for the life of the Church. After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. I am well aware that this ministry, due to its essential spiritual nature, must be carried out not only with words and deeds, but no less with

prayer and suffering. However, in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfil the ministry entrusted to me. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is."

"Dear Brothers, I thank you most sincerely for all the love and work with which you have supported me in my ministry and I ask pardon for all my defects. And now, let us entrust the Holy Church to the care of Our Supreme Pastor, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and implore his holy Mother Mary, so that she may assist the Cardinal Fathers with her maternal solicitude, in electing a new Supreme Pontiff. With regard to myself, I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer."

## COMPOSITION OF THE CONCLAVE

Vatican City, 11 February 2013 (VIS) The conclave to elect the successor of Benedict XVI will be regulated by the "Ordo Rituum Conclavis" established by John Paul II's apostolic constitution "Universi Dominici Gregis", para. 27. The Cardinal Camerlengo, who has a fundamental role during the Sede Vacante period, is Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, appointed by Benedict XVI on 4 April 2007.

The Cardinal electors, by their continents of provenance, will be 61 Europeans, 19 Latin Americans, 14 North Americans, 11 Africans, 11 Asians, and 1 from Oceania. These figures may vary depending on the date that the conclave opens: for example, Cardinal Walter Kasper will turn 80 on 5 March. The country with the greatest number of Cardinal electors is Italy, with 21. Sixty-seven of the electors were created by Benedict XVI and the remaining 50 by John Paul II.

One of John Paul II's innovations regarding the period of conclave is that the Cardinal electors of whom there will be 117 on 28 February will be housed in the Vatican residence Casa Santa Marta, which is independent from the place where they vote, the Sistine Chapel.

The Cardinal electors must remain in the Vatican during the entire period of conclave, and no one can approach them when they move from the Sistine Chapel to their place of residence or vice versa. All forms of communication with the outside world are prohibited. As in the past, the Sistine Chapel stove will be used to burn the ballots after each vote.

**THE FAMILY IS "GOOD NEWS" Vatican City, 4 February 2013 (VIS)** – This morning in the Press Office of the Holy See, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family presented the details of the conference "From Milan to Philadelphia: Perspectives of the Pontifical Council for the Family", which analysed the results of the 7th World Meeting of Families that took place in Milan in May of last year. Also participating in the press conference were married couple Francesca Dossi and Alfonso Colzani, directors of the Archdiocese of Milan's Service for Families.

The archbishop noted that that event "showed the vital force that families represent in the Church and in society itself. ... Of course, there are many problems related to marriage and the family, but we must not forget ... that the family continues to be the fundamental 'resource' of our society. ... The statistics are unanimous in pointing out that the family is the first place of safety, refuge, and support for life and remains at the top of the vast majority of young person's wishes. In Italy, for example, around 80% of young people say that they prefer marriage (whether it be civil or religious) and only 20% would choose co-habitation. ... In France, surveys indicate that 77% want to build their family life, staying with the same person throughout their lives. ... On the other hand, the need for family is inscribed on the human heart, since God tells us 'It is not good for the man to be alone'."

"This profound truth, which marks human life so radically, seems to take a beating from counter culture. ... There is an escalation in the race to individualism that is breaking up the family as well as other forms of society. That is why the breakdown of the family is the first problem of contemporary society ... It is true that much of contemporary Western History has been conceived as a liberation from every bond: from ties to others and thus the family, from any responsibility toward the other. It is also true that bonds have, sometimes, oppressed individuality. But today, the vertigo of solitude with its cult of 'me', free from any attachment ... and the disorientation caused by globalization further accentuate our becoming locked within ourselves and the temptation of self-absorption."

"The Church," he continued, "is concerned ... with the current crisis in marriage and the family, because she is aware that both are a Gospel, a good news for men and women today who are often alone, lacking love, parenting, and support. ... The Church, an 'expert in humanity' knows well ... the high price of the fragility of the family, which is paid mainly by the children (born and unborn), by the elderly, and by the ill. ... At times in various historical periods there have been transformations, even profound ones, in the institution of the family. But it has never abandoned its 'genome', its deep dimension, that is, its being as an institution formed by a man, a woman, and children. That is why a careful cultural reflection and an even more vigorous defense of the family is urgent, so that it might be placed and quickly at the centre of politics, the economy, and culture, in the different countries as well as in the different international organizations, even involving believers of other religious traditions and all persons of good will."

"The Pontifical Council for the Family feels the urgency to help from within as well as from outside the confines of the Church in order to rediscovery the value of the Family. ... There is great work to be done on the cultural level: working to restore value to a culture of the family so that it might once more become attractive to and relevant for life itself and for society. ... Taking care of a family does not mean restricting oneself to a segment of life or of society. Today it means widening horizons beyond oneself and deciding to participate in the building of a society that is familial, even of

embracing the 'family' of peoples and nations."

The prelate concluded by pointing out the initiatives that the pontifical council will launch throughout this year up to the next World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, including the presentation of the Charter of Rights of the Family which that dicastery has developed over thirty years?at the sites of the United Nations in New York and Geneva, and the European Parliament. In April, a series of seminars entitled "Dialogues for the Family" will begin, in which experts in different fields will address issues concerning the main challenges related to marriage and the family. In Rome, at the end of June, an international congress of Catholic lawyers will take place, focusing on the rights of the family. Finally, in October, the plenary assembly of the pontifical council will look at the Charter of the Rights of the Family. On the 26th and 27th of that month, for the Year of Faith, there will be a pilgrimage of families to the tomb of St. Peter.

## **MIDNIGHT MASS: MAY GOD GRANT US THE CURIOSITY TO KNOW HIM**

Vatican City, 24 December 2012 (VIS) - The Pope tonight celebrated Midnight Mass in the Vatican Basilica for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord.

During the Eucharistic celebration, following the reading of the Gospel, the Holy Father delivered his homily, ample extracts from which are given below:

"Again and again it astonishes us that God makes Himself a child so that we may love Him, so that we may dare to love Him, and as a child trustingly lets Himself be taken into our arms. It is as if God were saying: I know that my glory frightens you, and that you are trying to assert yourself in the face of my grandeur. So now I am coming to you as a child, so that you can accept me and love me.

"I am also repeatedly struck by the Gospel writer's almost casual remark that there was no room for them at the inn. Inevitably the question arises, what would happen if Mary and Joseph were to knock at my door. Would there be room for them? And then it occurs to us that Saint John takes up this seemingly chance comment about the lack of room at the inn, which drove the Holy Family into the stable; he explores it more deeply and arrives at the heart of the matter when he writes: 'he came to his own home, and his own people received him not'. The great moral question of our attitude towards the homeless, towards refugees and migrants, takes on a deeper dimension: ... Does God actually have a place in our thinking? Our process of thinking is structured in such a way that He simply ought not to exist. Even if He seems to knock at the door of our thinking, He has to be explained away. If thinking is to be taken seriously, it must be structured in such a way that the 'God hypothesis' becomes superfluous. ... We are so 'full' of ourselves that there is no room left for God.

"And that means there is no room for others either, for children, for the poor, for the stranger. By reflecting on that one simple saying about the lack of room at the inn, we have come to see how much we need to listen to Saint Paul's exhortation: 'Be transformed by the renewal of your mind'. Paul speaks of ... the whole way we view the world and ourselves. The conversion that we need must truly reach into the depths of our relationship with reality. Let us ask the Lord ... that we may that we may hear how ...

He knocks at the door of our being and willing. Let us ask that we may make room for Him within ourselves, that we may recognise Him also in those through whom He speaks to us: children, the suffering, the abandoned, those who are excluded and the poor of this world.

"There is another verse from the Christmas story on which I should like to reflect with you – the angels' hymn of praise, which they sing out following the announcement of the new-born Saviour: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.' God is glorious ... the radiance of truth and love. ... He is ... goodness par excellence. The angels surrounding Him begin by simply proclaiming the joy of seeing God's glory. ... There is no question of attempting to understand the meaning of it all, but simply the overflowing happiness of seeing the pure splendour of God's truth and love. We want to let this joy reach out and touch us: truth exists, pure goodness exists, pure light exists. God is good, and He is the supreme power above all powers. All this should simply make us joyful tonight, together with the angels and the shepherds.

"Linked to God's glory on high is peace on earth among men. Where God is not glorified, where He is forgotten or even denied, there is no peace either. Nowadays, though, widespread currents of thought assert the exact opposite: they say that religions, especially monotheism, are the cause of the violence and the wars in the world. If there is to be peace, humanity must first be liberated from them. Monotheism, belief in one God, is said to be arrogance, a cause of intolerance, because by its nature, with its claim to possess the sole truth, it seeks to impose itself on everyone.

"Now it is true that in the course of history, monotheism has served as a pretext for intolerance and violence. It is true that religion can become corrupted and hence opposed to its deepest essence, when people think they have to take God's cause into their own hands, making God into their private property. We must be on the lookout for these distortions of the sacred. While there is no denying a certain misuse of religion in history, it is not true that denial of God would lead to peace. If God's light is extinguished, man's divine dignity is also extinguished. Then the human creature would cease to be God's image, to which we must pay honour in every person, in the weak, in the stranger, in the poor. Then we would no longer all be brothers and sisters, children of the one Father, who belong to one another on account of that one Father. The kind of arrogant violence that then arises, the way man then despises and tramples upon man: we saw this in all its cruelty in the last century. Only if God's light shines over man and within him, only if every single person is desired, known and loved by God is his dignity inviolable, however wretched his situation may be. ... And through the centuries, while there has been misuse of religion, it is also true that forces of reconciliation and goodness have constantly sprung up from faith in the God Who became man. Into the darkness of sin and violence, this faith has shone a bright ray of peace and goodness, which continues to shine.

"So Christ is our peace. ... How could we now do other than pray to Him: Yes, Lord, proclaim peace today to us too, whether we are far away or near at hand. Grant also to us today that swords may be turned into ploughshares, that instead of weapons for warfare, practical aid may be given to the suffering. Enlighten those who think they have to practise violence in your name, so that they may see the senselessness of violence and learn to recognize your true face. Help us to become people 'with whom you are pleased' – people according to your image and thus people of peace".

"Let us go over to Bethlehem, says the Church's liturgy to us today. Trans-eamus is what the Latin Bible says: let us go 'across', daring to step beyond, to make the 'transition' by which we step outside our habits

of thought and habits of life, across the purely material world into the real one, across to the God Who in His turn has come across to us".

"Let us go over to Bethlehem: as we say these words to one another, along with the shepherds, we should not only think of the great 'crossing over' to the living God, but also of the actual town of Bethlehem and all those places where the Lord lived, ministered and suffered. Let us pray at this time for the people who live and suffer there today. Let us pray that there may be peace in that land. Let us pray that Israelis and Palestinians may be able to live their lives in the peace of the one God and in freedom. Let us also pray for the countries of the region, for Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and their neighbours: that there may be peace there, that Christians in those lands where our faith was born may be able to continue living there, that Christians and Muslims may build up their countries side by side in God's peace.

"The shepherds made haste. Holy curiosity and holy joy impelled them. In our case, it is probably not very often that we make haste for the things of God. God does not feature among the things that require haste. The things of God can wait, we think and we say. And yet He is the most important thing, ultimately the one truly important thing. Why should we not also be moved by curiosity to see more closely and to know what God has said to us? At this hour, let us ask Him to touch our hearts with the holy curiosity and the holy joy of the shepherds, and thus let us go over joyfully to Bethlehem, to the Lord Who today once more comes to meet us".

## **STUDYING VATICAN COUNCIL II FROM THE ARCHIVES**

Vatican City, 2 October 2012 (VIS) - A conference was held in the Holy See Press Office this morning to present an International Academic Conference: "Vatican Council II in the Light of the Archives of the Council Fathers, on the Fiftieth Anniversary of its Opening (1962-2012)". The event has been organised by the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences in collaboration with the "Vatican Council II" Centre for Research and Study of the Pontifical Lateran University, and will take place from 3 to 5 October.

Participating in this morning's presentation were Fr. Bernard Ardura O. Praem., president of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, and Philippe Chenaux, director of the "Vatican Council II" Centre for Research and Study of the Pontifical Lateran University and a member of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences.

Fr. Ardura explained how a global project has been organised in view of the anniversary of Vatican Council II, involving an examination of the personal archives of the Council Fathers, the aim being to produce original and academically valid research and to favour an increasingly deep understanding of an event "which has profoundly marked the life of the Church over the last half century".

"Following the path laid down by Blessed Pope John XXIII in his opening address to the Council, all available archive material must be submitted to careful historical scrutiny, in order to ensure that people do not, as the Pope himself said, 'act as if they had nothing to learn from history, which is a

teacher of life'. The consultation and publication of diaries, memories and correspondence of important figures who participated in Vatican Council II has already contributed to the development of an hermeneutic of the Council; ... that 'hermeneutic of reform in continuity' identified by Benedict XVI as the way to ensure authentic ecclesial interpretation.

"In this light", Fr. Ardura added, "we have begun researching the private archives of the Council Fathers, in order to identify and catalogue the documents they produced: diaries, notes on the various meetings of commission, ... and all the documents that may help us to understand how the Council Fathers experienced the great event, how they viewed it and how they reacted to the various opinions expressed".

The current conference is to be the first of two events on Vatican Council II. It aims to "present the current state of research and to highlight, for example, the difficulties encountered in searching the archives". Of the Council Fathers, 2,090 were from Europe and the Americas, while 408 were from Asia, 351 from Africa and 74 from Oceania. A large number of the latter came from mission lands and belonged to missionary institutions, for which reason much of their documentation is held in convents. Moreover the 'cult of the archive' which is habitual in Europe and America is not equally widespread in Asia and Africa, although the archives of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples do, to some extent, make up for these shortcomings".

Fr. Ardura explained that "the intention of the Pontifical Committee is to promote, in the light of the Holy Father's Magisterium and following a strict historical-critical methodology divorced from any ideology, a pondered and academically grounded historiographical re-reading of what was undeniably 'the great event' of Vatican Council II".

The conference will begin with a documentary prepared by the Vatican film library, and an opening address by two speakers. The first of these will be Cardinal Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milan, Italy, who will focus on the months between the announcement and the opening of the Council because, Fr. Ardura said, "the preparatory period offers many keys to understanding the subsequent development of the Council". The other opening speaker will be Professor Philippe Chenaux himself, who will discuss historiography with relation to Vatican Council II. In order to recall the ecumenical dimension, "strongly underlined" by Blessed John XXIII, one representative from the Patriarchate of Moscow and one from the Protestant churches will also attend the conference.

The results of the research of recent years, and of the conference, "will be a preliminary inventory of the Council Fathers' archives. This will be fed into an online database which may be consulted free of charge on the website of the Pontifical Council".

For his part, Philippe Chenaux explained that "the attempt to write a history of Vatican Council II involves not only research into the sources, ... but also interpretation, the so-called conciliar 'hermeneutic'. In other words, the historians who devised this project of the history of Vatican II have 'excogitated' the Council, whence have emerged two interpretative criteria which guided their work: the Council as 'event' and the Council as 'rupture'".

"The fundamental challenge for historians of the Council is, then, how to reconcile these two opposing readings of Vatican II and its decisions. This does not mean writing a 'counter history' of Vatican

Council II. Rather, more modestly, it means resuming historical research on the basis of the widest possible documentation and with no ideological bias. It means avoiding the manipulation of conciliar history for ends other than the history itself, in order to achieve a more balanced and shared understanding of the event and its decisions. 'Starting again from the archives', that is the challenge underlying the great research project of into the archives of the Council Fathers", he concluded.

**Vatican City, 21 April 2012 (VIS) - The Holy Father has appointed the following cardinals, created in the consistory of 18 February 2012, as members of dicasteries and offices of the Roman Curia:**

1. Cardinal George Alencherry of Ernakulam-Angamaly of the Syro-Malabars, India; Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, and Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, as members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

2. Cardinal George Alencherry of Ernakulam-Angamaly of the Syro-Malabars, India; Cardinal Timothy Michael Dolan, archbishop of New York, U.S.A.; Cardinal Lucian Muresan, major archbishop of Fagaras and Alba Julia of the Romanians, Romania; Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, and Cardinal Edwin Frederick O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, as members of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.

3. Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, as member of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

4. Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, penitentiary major, and Cardinal Santos Abril y Castello, archpriest of the papal basilica of St. Mary Major, as members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

5. Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, penitentiary major; Cardinal Santos Abril y Castello, archpriest of the papal basilica of St. Mary Major; Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State, and Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, as members of the Congregation for Bishops.

6. Cardinal John Tong Hon, bishop of Hong Kong, China; Cardinal Santos Abril y Castello, archpriest of the papal basilica of St. Mary Major; Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State, and Cardinal Domenico Calcagno, president of the Administration of

the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, as members of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples.

7. Cardinal Willem Jacobus Eijk, archbishop of Utrecht, Netherlands, and Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, as members of the Congregation for the Clergy.

8. Cardinal Dominik Jaroslav Duka O.P., archbishop of Prague, Czech Republic, and Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, as members of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

9. Cardinal Thomas Christopher Collins, archbishop of Toronto, Canada; Cardinal Willem Jacobus Eijk, archbishop of Utrecht, Netherlands; Cardinal Giuseppe Betori, archbishop of Florence, Italy; Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, archbishop of Berlin, Germany; Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples; Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and Cardinal Edwin Frederick O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, as members of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

10. Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, and Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, president of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See, as members of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura.

11. Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, as member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

12. Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki, archbishop of Berlin, Germany, and Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, as members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

13. Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, as member of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

14. Cardinal Dominik Jaroslav Duka O.P., archbishop of Prague, Czech Republic, and Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State, as members of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

15. Cardinal Edwin Frederick O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, as member of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum".

16. Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, penitentiary major, as member of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples.

17. Cardinal Domenico Calcagno, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, as member of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care.

18. Cardinal John Tong Hon, bishop of Hong Kong, China, as member of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

19. Cardinal Giuseppe Betori, archbishop of Florence, Italy, as member of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

20. Cardinal Thomas Christopher Collins, archbishop of Toronto, Canada, and Cardinal Timothy Michael Dolan, archbishop of New York, U.S.A., as members of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

21. Cardinal Timothy Michael Dolan, archbishop of New York, U.S.A., as member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation.

22. Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, as member of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

On Saturday 21 April it was also made public that the Holy Father appointed:

- As members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Cardinal Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milan, Italy, and Cardinal Donald William Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, U.S.A.
- Archbishop Lorenzo Balisseri, secretary of the Congregation for Bishops, as a consultor of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.
- Cardinal Domenico Calcagno, president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, as member of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State.
- Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State, as his special envoy to celebrations marking the millennium of the foundation of the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli, Italy, due to take place on 19 June.

## **FOURTH CENTENARY OF VATICAN SECRET ARCHIVES: 85 KM OF DOCUMENTS**

Vatican City, 18 April 2012 (VIS) - The Vatican Secret Archives, where all the documentation relating to the Holy See is conserved and catalogued, are this year celebrating their fourth centenary. Among the initiatives organised to mark the occasion is a congress entitled "Religiosa Archivorum Custodia", which began yesterday in the Vatican and is examining the history of the archives, their cultural importance and the results of the most recent research.

Due perhaps to an erroneous interpretation of the name (the word "secret" is to be understood in its Latin definition of "private"), the archives have always been surrounded by an aura of mystery. They were established by Pope Paul V in 1611 and originally contained the manuscripts from the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073-1085) which had survived the Avignon schism. Speaking on Vatican Radio Msgr. Sergio Pagano, prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, explained that they "contain centuries and centuries of catalogued letters sent or received by Popes, documents of the Apostolic Camera, diplomatic papers from the various nuncios and diplomatic missions, as well as documents from Councils and Synods, etc. The archives were originally contained in 400 metres of shelf space, now they cover 85 kilometres".

In 1881 Pope Leo XIII opened the archives for free consultation by researchers. According to the German historian Arnold Esch, "it is the greatest archive in the world as regards the Middle Ages. Above all it is an archive which contains material of universal value and importance".

Despite the efforts of academics a large part of the Vatican Secret Archives remains unexplored, chiefly the vast amount of material originating in apostolic nunciatures, and from the period of World War II.

## **VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY TO DIGITISE A MILLION PAGES OF MANUSCRIPTS AND INCUNABULA**

Vatican City, 13 April 2012 (VIS) - Msgr. Cesare Pasini, prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Library, announced in yesterday's "Osservatore Romano" that over the next five years 1.5 million pages of manuscripts and incunabula held in the Vatican and in the Bodleian Library in Oxford will be transferred into digital format. This is the largest such initiative yet carried out by the Vatican Library and is being put into effect with the assistance of the Polonsky Foundation.

Two thirds of the works to be digitised - around one million pages or 2,500 books - will be chosen from the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts and incunabula in the Vatican Apostolic Library. The institution possesses 8,900 incunabula, making it the fourth

largest collection in the world. A catalogue of the incunabula has recently been published on the internet and, thanks to this latest project, it is hoped to make more than 800 complete works available online. They include the famous "De Europa" by Pope Pius II, printed by Albrecht Kunne in Memmingen before 1491, and the 42-Line Latin Bible of Johann Gutenberg, the first book printed using moveable type, between 1454 and 1455.

Certain particularly important Hebrew manuscripts are also due to be digitised, including the "Sifra", written some time between the end of the ninth and the middle of the tenth century and perhaps the oldest surviving Jewish codex; a Bible written in Italy around the year 1100; commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud; Halakhah and Kabbalah, as well as writings on philosophy, medicine and astronomy.

Among the Greek manuscripts to be transferred into digital format are works by Homer, Sophocles, Plato and Hypocrites, as well as New Testament codices and works by Church Fathers, many decorated with Byzantine miniatures.

As well as its 8,900 incunabula, the Vatican Apostolic Library also possesses more than 80,000 manuscripts. Msgr. Pasini explains that transferring them to digital format is a way of "better conserving cultural heritage, facilitating consultation and ensuring a high-quality reproduction before any eventual degradation of the original. It also means making those works immediately accessible to many more people online".

The Vatican Apostolic Library's digitisation project began two years ago, since when the number of manuscripts available in digital format has been gradually increasing thanks to the efforts of the library's own reproduction laboratory. There are also a number of initiatives under way in collaboration with other cultural institutions, such as the ongoing digitisation of the Latin Palatine manuscripts being carried out with the University of Heidelberg.

## **PRESENTATION OF PONTIFICAL YEARBOOK 2012**

Vatican City, 10 March 2012 (VIS) - This morning, Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone S.D.B. and Archbishop Angelo Becciu, substitute for General Affairs, presented the Holy Father with the 2012 edition of the "Annuario Pontificio" or pontifical yearbook, and the "Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae". Also present were the officials responsible for compiling and printing the volumes.

A note concerning the presentation highlights some of the facts contained in the new edition. In 2011, the Pope erected eight new episcopal sees, one personal ordinariate and one military ordinariate. One archdiocese and eight dioceses were elevated to the rank of metropolitan see; one prelature, one apostolic vicariate and one apostolic prefecture were elevated to the rank of diocese, and one "sui iuris" mission was elevated to the rank of apostolic prefecture.

The statistical information, which refers to the year 2010, reveals details about the Catholic Church in the 2,966 ecclesiastical circumscriptions on the planet. The number of Catholics in the world moved from 1,181 million in 2009 to 1,196 million in 2010, an increase of fifteen million faithful, corresponding to a growth of 1.3 percent. Over the last two years the presence of baptised Catholics in the world has remained stable at around 17.5 per cent.

The number of Catholics with respect to the total population varies considerably between the continents. Their numbers have dropped in South America (from 28.54 per cent to 28.34 per cent) and in Europe (from 24.05 per cent to 23.83 per cent), while they have increased in Africa (from 15.15 per cent to 15.55 per cent) and in South-East Asia (from 10.47 per cent to 10.87 per cent).

The number of bishops went from 5,065 to 5,104, a growth of 0.77 per cent. This increase involved Africa (sixteen new bishops), America (fifteen) and Asia (twelve), while numbers fell slightly in Europe (from 1,607 to 1,606) and in Oceania (from 132 to 129).

The steady increase in the number of priests which began in the year 2000 has continued. In 2010 their numbers stood at 412,236, composed of 227,009 diocesan priests and 135,227 regular priests; whereas in 2009 they numbered 410,593 (275,542 diocesan and 135,051 regular). The number of clergy has increased in Asia (by 1695), Africa (765), Oceania (52) and the Americas (42), while their numbers have fallen by 905 in Europe.

Numbers of permanent deacons have increased by 3.7 per cent, from 38,155 in 2009 to 39,564 in 2010. They are present above all in North America and Europe, which respectively represent 64.3 per cent and 33.2 per cent of the world total.

The negative tendency in the number of non-ordained male religious reversed, as their number passed from 54,229 in 2009 to 54,665 in 2010. Numbers fell by 3.5 per cent in South America and by 0.9 per cent in North America, in Europe they remained stationary while Asia and Africa saw an increase of 4.1 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively.

The number of female religious is undergoing a strong decline, moving from 729,371 in 2009 to 721,935 in 2010. Numbers fell by 2.9 per cent in Europe, by 2.6 per cent in Oceania and by 1.6 per cent the Americas. Nonetheless they increased by around 2 per cent in both Africa and Asia

The number of students of philosophy and theology in diocesan and religious seminaries has increased constantly over the last five years, from 114,439 in 2005 to 111,990 in 2010, a growth of 4 per cent.

Numbers of major seminarians have fallen by 10.4 per cent in Europe, and by 1.1 per cent in the Americas, but are increasing in Africa (14.2 per cent,) Asia (13 per cent) and Oceania (12.3 per cent).

## **SEVENTY PER CENT OF WORLD POPULATION LIVE IN COUNTRIES WITH HIGH RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

Vatican City, 6 March 2012 (VIS) - "Terrorist attacks on Christians in Africa, the Middle East and Asia increased 309 per cent between 2003 and 2010. Approximately 70 per cent of the world's population lives in countries with high restrictions on religious beliefs and practices, and religious minorities pay the highest price". These words were pronounced on 1 March by Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi C.S., permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at Geneva, during the course of the nineteenth ordinary session of the Human Rights Council.

Speaking English, Archbishop Tomasi recalled how, "in general, rising restrictions on religion affect more than 2.2 billion people. Those affected have either lost the protection of their societies or have experienced some government-imposed and unjust restrictions, or have become victims of violence resulting from an impulsive bigotry".

Among the causes of this phenomenon, the archbishop mentioned "the evolving political situation, wrong perceptions of the role of religion, expediency, and subtle ambiguities in the understanding of secularism". In the current situation, it is vital for the international community "to assure the protection of people in their exercise of freedom of religion and religious practice".

In this context, the Holy See observer noted that States must guarantee all their citizens the right to religious freedom, at both the individual and community level. Freedom of religion is not a derived or granted right, "but a fundamental and inalienable right of the human person. ... The task of government is not to define religion, ... but to confer upon faith communities a juridical personality so that they can function peacefully within a legal framework.

"Respect for the religious freedom of everyone may be at stake in places where the concept of "State religion" is recognised, especially when the latter becomes the source of unjust treatment of others, whether they believe in other faiths or have none".

The archbishop went on: "Above the institutional considerations, the critical problem facing the promotion and protection of human rights in the area of religious freedom is the intolerance that leads to violence and to the killing of many innocent people each year simply because of their religious convictions. The realistic and collective responsibility, therefore, is to sustain mutual tolerance and respect of human rights and a greater equality among citizens of different religions in order to achieve a healthy democracy where the public role of religion and the distinction between religious and temporal spheres are recognised. ... But to achieve this desirable goal, there is a need to overcome a culture that devalues the human person and is intent on eliminating religion from public life".

"Religions are not a threat, but a resource", he said. "They contribute to the development of civilisations, and this is good for everyone. Their freedom and activities should be protected so that the partnership between religious beliefs and societies may enhance the common good. ... The educational system and the media have a major role to play by excluding prejudice and hatred from textbooks, from newscasts and from newspapers, and by disseminating accurate and fair information on all component groups of society.

"But lack of education and information, that facilitates an easier manipulation of people for political advantages, is too often linked to underdevelopment, poverty, lack of access to effective participation in the management of society. Greater social justice provides fertile ground for the implementation of all human rights. Religions are communities based on convictions and their freedom guarantees a contribution of moral values without which the freedom of everyone is not possible. For this reason", Archbishop Tomasi concluded, "it becomes an urgent and beneficial responsibility of the international community to counteract the trend of increasing violence against religious groups and of mistaken and deceptive neutrality that in fact aims at neutralising religion".

## **COMPOSITION OF THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS**

Vatican City, 18 February 2012 (VIS) - With the creation of twenty-two new cardinals in this morning's consistory, the College of Cardinals now has 213 members of whom 125, being under the age of eighty, are eligible to vote in an eventual conclave for the election of a new Pope. The non electors, that is, cardinals over the age of eighty and ineligible to vote in a conclave, now number 88.

Benedict XVI has created eighty-four cardinals in the four consistories of his pontificate.

The current members of the College of Cardinals come from seventy-one States, distributed as follows: Europe 119, North America (U.S.A. and Canada) 21, Latin America 32, Africa 17, Asia 20 and Oceania 4.

## **NEVER SURRENDER TO THE LURE OF PESSIMISM**

VATICAN CITY, 9 OCT 2011 (VIS) - Benedict XVI today made a pastoral visit to Lamezia Terme and Serra San Bruno, located in the region of Calabria in southern Italy. He began the day by travelling by plane from Ciampino airport in Rome to Lamezia Terme where he celebrated Mass at an industrial area on the outskirts of the town.

"In this Sunday's liturgy we heard the parable narrating the wedding feast to which many guests were invited", said the Holy Father in his homily. "The image of a banquet

is often used in Scripture to indicate joy in communion and in the abundance of the Lord's gifts. ... Many people were invited, but something unexpected happened: they refused to participate in the feast, they had other things to do". However this did not deter the king who was organising the feast. "He was not discouraged but sent his servants out to invite others. The refusal of the first invitees had the effect of extending the invitation to everyone, including the poor, the abandoned and the disinherited. ... However there was a condition to attending this wedding feast: guests had to wear the wedding robe. Entering the hall, the king realised that someone had chosen not to wear it and, for this reason, that guest was excluded from the feast".

To explain the significance of the "wedding robe", the Holy Father quoted from a commentary written by St. Gregory the Great. "In a certain sense, the guest who responded to God's invitation to participate in His banquet had faith, which opened the door of the hall to him, but he lacked something essential: the wedding robe, which is charity, love. ... In symbolic terms the robe is woven with two threads: ... love of God and love of neighbour. We are all invited to be guests of the Lord, to enter with faith into His banquet, but we must wear and preserve the wedding robe, which is charity, we must live with profound love for God and for neighbour".

"I have come to share with you the joys and hopes, the toils and commitments, the ideals and aspirations of this diocesan community", Benedict XVI told the faithful. "This beautiful region is seismic not only in a geological sense, but also in structural, behavioural and social terms. It is a land where problems are acute and destabilising, a land where unemployment is a great concern, where an often pitiless criminality damages the fabric of society, a land which seems to be in a perpetual state of emergency. To that emergency you people of Calabria have responded with surprising readiness, with an extraordinary capacity to adapt to difficulties. ... Never surrender to the lure of pessimism, never close in on yourselves. Draw on the resources of your faith and your human capacities; strive to increase collaboration, to look after one another and the public good; preserve the wedding robe of love".

The Pope then went on to recall that his visit coincided with the end of the five-year pastoral plan of the local Church. He praised the initiatives that had been completed during that time, including a school for the Social Doctrine of the Church, expressing the hope that "such initiatives will produce a new generation of men and women capable of promoting the common good more than private interests". He also had words of encouragement for clergy and lay people who work to prepare Christian couples for marriage and the family "providing a response that is both evangelical and effective to the many challenges facing the family and life today".

Finally, the Holy Father praised priests for the work they do, encouraging them "increasingly to root your own spiritual lives in the Gospel, ... detaching yourselves from the worldly consumer mentality which is such a recurring temptation in the times in which we live. ... Use discernment and ecclesiastical criteria to evaluate groups and movements", he said.

"Do not be afraid to live and bear witness to the faith in the various fields of society, in the multifarious situations of human life", he concluded, addressing the faithful. "Thanks to the light of faith and the force of charity, you have every reason to be strong, trusting and courageous".

## **MONASTERIES ARE INDISPENSABLE TO MODERN SOCIETY**

VATICAN CITY, 9 OCT 2011 (VIS) - At 5.15 p.m. today, the Holy Father arrived by helicopter at Serra San Bruno, then continued his journey by car to the Carthusian monastery of Sts. Stephen and Bruno. He was greeted on the square in front of the monastery by Bruno Rosi, mayor of Serra San Bruno, then addressed some words to the many faithful from the local area who had gathered there to see him.

The Pope recalled the visit made to Serra San Bruno by John Paul II in 1984, noting that it is "a great privilege" to have a "'citadel' of the spirit" such as the Carthusian monastery on one's local territory. "Monasteries have an important, I would say indispensable, role", he said. "Their purpose today is to 'improve' the environment, in the sense that sometimes the air we breathe in our societies is unhealthy, it is polluted by a non-Christian mentality, at times even a non-human mentality, because it is dominated by economic interests, concerned only with worldly things and lacking a spiritual dimension.

"In such a climate not only God but also our fellow man is pushed to the margins, and we do not commit ourselves to the common good. Monasteries, however, are models of societies which have God and fraternal relations at their core. We have great need of them in our time".

Benedict XVI completed his remarks by exhorting the faithful of Serra San Bruno "to treasure the great spiritual tradition of this place, and seek to put it into practice in your daily lives".

## **SILENCE AND SOLITUDE REVEAL THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

VATICAN CITY, 9 OCT 2011 (VIS) - Having addressed the local people of Serra San Bruno, the Holy Father entered the Carthusian monastery of Sts. Stephen and Bruno where he was greeted by the prior, Fr. Jacques Dupont. At 6 p.m. the Pope presided at Vespers with the monastic community in the monastery church.

In his homily the Pope explained that the aim of his visit was to confirm the Carthusian Order in its mission, "more vital and important today than ever before", he said. The spiritual core of the Carthusians, founded by St. Bruno, lies in the desire "to enter into union of life with God, abandoning everything which impedes such communion,

allowing oneself to be seized by the immense love of God and living from that love alone", through solitude and silence.

Technological progress, the Holy Father noted, has made man's life more comfortable but also "more agitated, even convulsive". The growth of the communications media means that today we run the risk of virtual reality dominating reality itself. "People are increasingly, even unwittingly, immersed in a virtual dimension, thanks to the audiovisual images that accompany their lives from morning to evening. The youngest, having been born in this state, seem to fill each vacant moment with music and images, almost as if afraid to contemplate the void. ... Some people are no longer capable of remaining silent and alone".

This situation of modern society and culture "throws light on the specific charism of the Carthusian monastery as a precious gift for the Church and for the world, a gift which contains a profound message for our lives and for all humanity. I would summarise it in these terms: by withdrawing in silence and solitude man, so to speak, 'exposes' himself to the truth of his nakedness, he exposes himself to that apparent 'void' I mentioned earlier. But in doing so he experiences fullness, the presence of God, of the most real Reality that exists. ... Monks, by leaving everything, expose themselves to solitude and silence so as to live only from what is essential; and precisely in living from the essential they discover a profound communion with their brothers and sisters, with all mankind".

This vocation, the Pope went on, "finds its response in a journey, a lifelong search. ... Becoming a monk requires time, exercise, patience. ... The beauty of each vocation in the Church lies in giving time to God to work with His Spirit, and in giving time to one's own humanity to form, to grow in a particular state of life according to the measure of maturity in Christ. In Christ there is everything, fullness. However we need time to possess one of the dimensions of His mystery. ... *At times, in the eyes of the world, it seems impossible that someone should spend his entire life in a monastery, but in reality a lifetime is hardly sufficient to enter into this union with God, into the essential and profound Reality which is Jesus Christ*".

*"The Church needs you and you need the Church", the Holy Father told the monks at the end of his homily. "You, who live in voluntary isolation, are in fact at the heart of the Church; you ensure that the pure blood of contemplation and of God's love flows in her veins"*.

Following the celebration, the Holy Father met with the monastic community in the refectory, he signed the visitors book then visited a cell and the infirmary of the monastery. He then returned by helicopter to Lamezia Terme whence he departed by plane for Rome at 8 p.m.

## PRESENTATION OF NEW VATICAN MULTIMEDIA PORTAL

VATICAN CITY, 27 JUN 2011 (VIS) - At midday today in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the new Vatican internet portal "news.va", which will be inaugurated by the Pope tomorrow, 28 June, eve of the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Participating in today's event were: Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications; Fr. Federico Lombardi, director of the Holy See Press Office; Giovanni Maria Vian, director of the " Osservatore Romano " newspaper; Gustavo Entrala, founder and director of the 101 advertising agency, and Thaddeus Jones, an official of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

Archbishop Celli expressed his happiness at having the opportunity to present the new multimedia portal which will come online on 29 June, Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul, Apostles, "thus completing the task entrusted to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications by the Secretariat of State", he said.

"Our desire", he went on, is to ensure that the new portal "should be an expression of our faithfulness and dedication to the Holy Father, for the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood".

The president of the dicastery explained how it will now be possible "to consult at [news.va](http://news.va) the principal news items printed or transmitted by other Vatican media outlets": the " Osservatore Romano ", Vatican Radio, the Vatican Information Service, Agenzia Fides, the Holy See Press Office and the Vatican Television Centre.

The new portal will contain news items relating to the words and activities of the Holy Father in the course of his Magisterium, declarations issued by the various dicasteries of the Holy See, and information about important global events and situations affecting the particular Churches.

"For the first few months", Archbishop Celli explained, "the portal will be available in just two languages: Italian and English. ... After the summer the website will be restyled and at least one new language added, perhaps Spanish. Subsequently it will also become available in French and Portuguese".

Concerning its relationship with other Vatican media outlets, the archbishop pointed out that the new portal "will not have a specific editorial slant. ... Each of the outlets will maintain its own autonomy and identity, as will be evident from the way in which the information is presented".

The main Vatican website ([vatican.va](http://vatican.va)) "will not disappear, but will continue its mission to put the Holy Father's Magisterium online. Since it was founded, the Vatican website has served as a source of documentation and so it will remain, working in harmony with the new portal".

The president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications expressed particular thanks to Thaddeus Jones for having co-ordinated the activities "which brought this long and not always easy process to a successful conclusion".

Finally he also thanked Gustavo Entrala of the 101 advertising agency, who oversaw the technical and graphic aspects of the initiative.

## **TRUTH, PROCLAMATION AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

VATICAN CITY, 24 JAN 2011 (VIS) - Made public today was the Holy Father's Message for the forty-fifth World Day of Social Communications, which will be celebrated on 5 June and has as its theme: "Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age". The Message is dated 24 January, Feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of journalists.

Excerpts from the English-language version of the Message are given below:

"New technologies are not only changing the way we communicate, but communication itself, so much so that it could be said that we are living through a period of vast cultural transformation. This means of spreading information and knowledge is giving birth to a new way of learning and thinking, with unprecedented opportunities for establishing relationships and building fellowship.

"New horizons are now open that were until recently unimaginable; they stir our wonder at the possibilities offered by these new media and, at the same time, urgently demand a serious reflection on the significance of communication in the digital age. This is particularly evident when we are confronted with the extraordinary potential of the internet and the complexity of its uses. As with every other fruit of human ingenuity, the new communications technologies must be placed at the service of the integral good of the individual and of the whole of humanity. If used wisely, they can contribute to the satisfaction of the desire for meaning, truth and unity which remain the most profound aspirations of each human being.

"In the digital world, transmitting information increasingly means making it known within a social network where knowledge is shared in the context of personal exchanges. The clear distinction between the producer and consumer of information is relativised and communication appears not only as an exchange of data, but also as a form of sharing. ... On the other hand, this is contrasted with the limits typical of digital communication: the one-sidedness of the interaction, the tendency to communicate only some parts of one's interior world, the risk of constructing a false image of oneself, which can become a form of self-indulgence".

"Ever greater involvement in the public digital forum, created by the so-called social networks, helps to establish new forms of interpersonal relations, influences self-awareness and therefore inevitably poses questions not only of how to act properly, but also about the authenticity of one's own being. .... In the search for sharing, for 'friends', there is the challenge to be authentic and faithful, and not give in to the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself.

"The new technologies allow people to meet each other beyond the confines of space and of their own culture, creating in this way an entirely new world of potential friendships. This is a great opportunity, but it also requires greater attention to and awareness of possible risks. Who is my 'neighbour' in this new world? Does the danger exist that we may be less present to those whom we encounter in our everyday life? Is there a risk of being more distracted because our attention is fragmented and absorbed in a world 'other' than the one in which we live? Do we have time to reflect critically on our choices and to foster human relationships which are truly deep and lasting? It is important always to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives".

"To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one's own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically. Furthermore, it is also true in the digital world that a message cannot be proclaimed without a consistent witness on the part of the one who proclaims it."

"We must be aware that the truth which we long to share does not derive its worth from its 'popularity' or from the amount of attention it receives. We must make it known in its integrity, instead of seeking to make it acceptable or diluting it. It must become daily nourishment and not a fleeting attraction.

"The truth of the Gospel is not something to be consumed or used superficially; rather it is a gift that calls for a free response. Even when it is proclaimed in the virtual space of the web, the Gospel demands to be incarnated in the real world and linked to the real faces of our brothers and sisters, those with whom we share our daily lives. Direct human relations always remain fundamental for the transmission of the faith!

"I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life. The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness. In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God".

"The proclamation of the Gospel requires a communication which is at once respectful and sensitive, which stimulates the heart and moves the conscience; one which reflects the example of the risen Jesus when He joined the disciples on the way to Emmaus".

"In the final analysis, the truth of Christ is the full and authentic response to that human desire for relationship, communion and meaning which is reflected in the immense popularity of social networks. Believers who bear witness to their most profound convictions greatly help prevent the web from becoming an instrument which depersonalises people, attempts to manipulate them emotionally or allows those who are powerful to monopolise the opinions of others. On the contrary, believers encourage everyone to keep alive the eternal human questions which testify to our desire for transcendence and our longing for authentic forms of life, truly worthy of being lived. It is precisely this uniquely human spiritual yearning which inspires our quest for truth and for communion and which impels us to communicate with integrity and honesty.

"I invite young people above all to make good use of their presence in the digital world. I repeat my invitation to them for the next World Youth Day in Madrid, where the new technologies are contributing greatly to the preparations".

## **ERECTION OF A PERSONAL ORDINARIATE FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

VATICAN CITY, 15 JAN 2011 (VIS) - "In accordance with the provisions of the Apostolic Constitution 'Anglicanorum coetibus' of Pope Benedict XVI (4 November 2009) and after careful consultation with the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has today erected a Personal Ordinariate within the territory of England and Wales for those groups of Anglican clergy and faithful who have expressed their desire to enter into full visible communion with the Catholic Church", reads an English-language communique released today. "The Decree of Erection specifies that the Ordinariate will be known as the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham and will be placed under the patronage of Blessed John Henry Newman.

"A Personal Ordinariate is a canonical structure that provides for corporate reunion in such a way that allows former Anglicans to enter full communion with the Catholic Church while preserving elements of their distinctive Anglican patrimony. With this structure, the Apostolic Constitution 'Anglicanorum coetibus' seeks to balance on the one hand the concern to preserve the worthy Anglican liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions and, on the other hand, the concern that these groups and their clergy will be fully integrated into the Catholic Church.

"For doctrinal reasons the Church does not, in any circumstances, allow the ordination of married men as bishops. However, the Apostolic Constitution does provide, under certain conditions, for the ordination as Catholic priests of former Anglican married clergy. Today at Westminster Cathedral in London, Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, ordained to the Catholic priesthood three former Anglican bishops: Reverend Andrew Burnham, Reverend Keith Newton, and Reverend John Broadhurst.

"Also today Pope Benedict XVI has nominated Reverend Keith Newton as the first Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. Together with Reverend Burnham and Reverend Broadhurst, Reverend Newton will oversee the catechetical preparation of the first groups of Anglicans in England and Wales who will be received into the Catholic Church together with their pastors at Easter, and will accompany the clergy preparing for ordination to the Catholic priesthood around Pentecost.

"The provision of this new structure is consistent with the commitment to ecumenical dialogue, which continues to be a priority for the Catholic Church. The initiative leading to the publication of the Apostolic Constitution and the erection of this Personal Ordinariate came from a number of different groups of Anglicans who have declared that they share the common Catholic faith as it is expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and accept the Petrine ministry as something Christ willed for the Church. For them, the time has now come to express this implicit unity in the visible form of full communion".