***VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
AT THE VIGIL OF THE APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KENYA AND UGANDA***[25-30 NOVEMBER 2015]

*Dear Friends,*

As I prepare to visit Kenya and Uganda later this month, I send a word of greeting and friendship to you and your families. I look forward to this time we will have together.

I am coming as a minister of the Gospel, to proclaim the love of Jesus Christ and his message of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace. My visit is meant to confirm the Catholic community in its worship of God and its witness to the Gospel, which teaches the dignity of every man and woman, and commands us to open our hearts to others, especially the poor and those in need.

At the same time I wish to encounter all the people of Kenya and Uganda, and to offer everyone a word of encouragement. We are living at a time when religious believers, and persons of good will everywhere, are called to foster mutual understanding and respect, and to support each other as members of our one human family. For all of us are God’s children. A highlight of my visit will be my meetings with young people, who are your greatest resource and our most promising hope for a future of solidarity, peace and progress.

I know that many people are working hard to prepare for my visit, and I thank them. I ask everyone to pray that my stay in Kenya and Uganda will be a source of hope and encouragement to all. Upon you and your families I invoke God’s blessings of joy and peace!

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*State House, Nairobi  
Wednesday, 25 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/25/kenyaautorita.html)**]**

*Mr President,  
Honourable Government and Civil Leaders,  
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
My Brother Bishops,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am most grateful for your warm welcome on this, my first visit to Africa. I thank you, Mr President, for your kind words in the name of the Kenyan people, and I look forward to my stay among you. Kenya is a young and vibrant nation, a richly diverse society which plays a significant role in the region. In many ways your experience of shaping a democracy is one shared by many other African nations. Like Kenya, they too are working to build, on the solid foundations of mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation, a multiethnic society which is truly harmonious, just and inclusive.

Yours too is a nation of young people. In these days, I look forward to meeting many of them, speaking with them, and encouraging their hopes and aspirations for the future. The young are any nation’s most valuable resource. To protect them, to invest in them and to offer them a helping hand, is the best way we can ensure a future worthy of the wisdom and spiritual values dear to their elders, values which are the very heart and soul of a people.

Kenya has been blessed not only with immense beauty, in its mountains, rivers and lakes, its forests, savannahs and semi-deserts, but also by an abundance of natural resources. The Kenyan people have a strong appreciation of these God-given treasures and are known for a culture of conservation which does you honour. The grave environmental crisis facing our world demands an ever greater sensitivity to the relationship between human beings and nature. We have a responsibility to pass on the beauty of nature in its integrity to future generations, and an obligation to exercise a just stewardship of the gifts we have received. These values are deeply rooted in the African soul. In a world which continues to exploit rather than protect our common home, they must inspire the efforts of national leaders to promote responsible models of economic development.

In effect, there is a clear link between the protection of nature and the building of a just and equitable social order. There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature, without a renewal of humanity itself (cf. [*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 118). To the extent that our societies experience divisions, whether ethnic, religious or economic, all men and women of good will are called to work for reconciliation and peace, forgiveness and healing. In the work of building a sound democratic order, strengthening cohesion and integration, tolerance and respect for others, the pursuit of the common good must be a primary goal. Experience shows that violence, conflict and terrorism feed on fear, mistrust, and the despair born of poverty and frustration. Ultimately, the struggle against these enemies of peace and prosperity must be carried on by men and women who fearlessly believe in, and bear honest witness to, the great spiritual and political values which inspired the birth of the nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the advancement and preservation of these great values is entrusted in a special way to you, the leaders of your country’s political, cultural and economic life. This is a great responsibility, a true calling, in the service of the entire Kenyan people. The Gospel tells us that from those to whom much has been given, much will be demanded (*Lk* 12:48). In that spirit, I encourage you to work with integrity and transparency for the common good, and to foster a spirit of solidarity at every level of society. I ask you in particular to show genuine concern for the needs of the poor, the aspirations of the young, and a just distribution of the natural and human resources with which the Creator has blessed your country. I assure you of the continued efforts of the Catholic community, through its educational and charitable works, to offer its specific contribution in these areas.

Dear friends, I am told that here in Kenya it is a tradition for young schoolchildren to plant trees for posterity. May this eloquent sign of hope in the future, and trust in the growth which God gives, sustain all of you in your efforts to cultivate a society of solidarity, justice and peace on the soil of this country and throughout the great African continent. I thank you once more for your warm welcome, and upon you and your families, and all the beloved Kenyan people, I invoke the Lord’s abundant blessings.

*Mungu abariki Kenya!*

*God bless Kenya!*

[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Hall of the Apostolic Nunciature, Nairobi (Kenya)  
Thursday, 26 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/26/kenyainterreligioso.html)**]**

*Dear Friends,*

I am grateful for your presence this morning and for the opportunity to share these moments of reflection with you. In a particular way, I wish to thank Archbishop Wabukala and Professor El-Busaidy for their words of welcome offered on your behalf, and on behalf of their communities. It is always important to me that, when I come to visit the Catholic faithful of a local Church, I have an occasion to meet the leaders of other Christian communities and religious traditions. It is my hope that our time together may be a sign of the Church’s esteem for the followers of all religions; may it strengthen the bonds of friendship which we already enjoy.

To be honest, this relationship is challenging; it makes demands of us. Yet ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is not a luxury. It is not something extra or optional, but essential, something which our world, wounded by conflict and division, increasingly needs.

Indeed, religious beliefs and practice condition who we are and how we understand the world around us. They are for us a source of enlightenment, wisdom and solidarity, and thus enrich the societies in which we live. By caring for the spiritual growth of our communities, by forming minds and hearts in the truths and values taught by our religious traditions, we become a blessing to the communities in which our people live. In democratic and pluralistic societies like Kenya, cooperation between religious leaders and communities becomes an important service to the common good.

In this light, and in an increasingly interdependent world, we see ever more clearly the need for interreligious understanding, friendship and collaboration in defending the God-given dignity of individuals and peoples, and their right to live in freedom and happiness. By upholding respect for that dignity and those rights, the religions play an essential role in forming consciences, instilling in the young the profound spiritual values of our respective traditions, and training good citizens, capable of infusing civil society with honesty, integrity and a world view which values the human person over power and material gain.

Here I think of the importance of our common conviction that the God whom we seek to serve is a God of peace. His holy Name must never be used to justify hatred and violence. I know that the barbarous attacks on Westgate Mall, Garissa University College and Mandera are fresh in your minds. All too often, young people are being radicalized in the name of religion to sow discord and fear, and to tear at the very fabric of our societies. How important it is that we be seen as prophets of peace, peacemakers who invite others to live in peace, harmony and mutual respect! May the Almighty touch the hearts of those who engage in this violence, and grant his peace to our families and communities.

Dear friends, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, at which the Catholic Church committed herself to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the service of understanding and friendship. I wish to reaffirm this commitment, which is born of our conviction of the universality of God’s love and the salvation which he offers to all. The world rightly expects believers to work together with people of good will in facing the many problems affecting our human family. As we look to the future, let us pray that all men and women will see themselves as brothers and sisters, peacefully united in and through our differences. Let us pray for peace!

I thank you for your attention, and I ask Almighty God to grant to you and your communities his abundant blessings.

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TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**HOLY MASS**

***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Nairobi University Campus (Kenya)  
Thursday, 26 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/26/messanairobi.html)**]**

God’s word speaks to us in the depths of our heart. Today God tells us that we belong to him. He made us, we are his family, and he will always be there for us. “Fear not”, he says to us, “I have chosen you and I promise to give you my blessing” (cf. *Is* 44:2).

We hear this promise in today’s first reading. The Lord tells us that in the desert he will pour forth water on the thirsty land; he will cause the children of his people to flourish like grass and luxuriant willows. We know that this prophecy was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But we also see it fulfilled wherever the Gospel is preached and new peoples become members of God’s family, the Church. Today we rejoice that it was fulfilled in this land. Through the preaching of the Gospel, you too became part of the great Christian family.

Isaiah’s prophecy invites us to look to our own families, and to realize how important they are in God’s plan. Kenyan society has long been blessed with strong family life, a deep respect for the wisdom of the elderly and love for children. The health of any society depends on the health of its families. For their sake, and for the good of society, our faith in God’s word calls us to support families in their mission in society, to accept children as a blessing for our world, and to defend the dignity of each man and woman, for all of us are brothers and sisters in the one human family.

In obedience to God’s word, we are also called to resist practices which foster arrogance in men, hurt or demean women, and threaten the life of the innocent unborn. We are called to respect and encourage one another, and to reach out to all those in need. Christian families have this special mission: to radiate God’s love, and to spread the life-giving waters of his Spirit. This is especially important today, for we are seeing the growth of new deserts created by a culture of materialism and indifference to others.

Here, in the heart of this University, where the minds and hearts of new generations are being shaped, I appeal in a special way to the young people of the nation. Let the great values of Africa’s traditions, the wisdom and truth of God’s word, and the generous idealism of your youth guide you in working to shape a society which is ever more just, inclusive and respectful of human dignity. May you always be concerned for the needs of the poor, and reject everything that leads to prejudice and discrimination, for these things, we know, are not of God.

All of us are familiar with Jesus’ parable about the man who built his house on sand, rather than rock. When the winds came, it fell with a mighty crash (cf. *Mt* 7:24-27). God is the rock on which we are called to build. He tells us this in the first reading, and he asks us: “Is there a God besides me?” (cf. *Is* 44:8).

When the Risen Jesus says, in today’s Gospel, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (*Mt* 28:18), he is telling us that he, the Son of God, is himself the rock. There is none besides him. As the one Saviour of mankind, he wishes to draw men and women of every time and place to himself, so that he can bring them to the Father. He wants all of us to build our lives on the firm foundation of his word.

And that is the charge which the Lord gives to each of us. He asks us to be missionary disciples, men and women who radiate the truth, beauty and life-changing power of the Gospel. Men and women who are channels of God’s grace, who enable his mercy, kindness and truth to become the building blocks of a house that stands firm. A house which is a home, where brothers and sisters at last live in harmony and mutual respect, in obedience to the will of the true God, who has shown us, in Jesus, the way to that freedom and peace for which all hearts long.

May Jesus, the Good Shepherd, the rock on whom we build our lives, guide you and your families in the way of goodness and mercy all the days of your lives. May he bless all Kenyans with his peace.

“Stand strong in faith! Do not be afraid!” For you belong to the Lord.

*Mungu awabariki! (God bless you!)*

*Mungu abariki Kenya! (God bless Kenya!)*

[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
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(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH CLERGY, MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Sports field of St Mary’s School, Nairobi (Kenya)  
Thursday, 26 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/26/kenyareligiosi.html)**]**

V. *Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!* (Praised be Jesus Christ!)

R. *(Milele na Milele. Amina.)* (Now and forever. Amen.)

[Thanks for being here. I wish I could speak in English, but my English is not very good. I have listened carefully and there is much that I would like to say to each and every one of you… It is easier for me to speak in my native tongue; Mgr Miles can translate. Thank you for understanding.]

During the reading of the letter of Saint Paul, I was struck by these words: “May God who began a good work in you bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus!” (*Phil* 1:6).

All of you were chosen by the Lord; he chose each one of us. He began a good work on the day he looked at us in baptism, and then later, when he looked at us and said: “If you wish, come with me”. So we lined up and began our journey. But it was he who began the journey, not ourselves. In the Gospel we read about one of the people Jesus healed, who then wanted to follow him. But Jesus told him “no”. If we want to follow Jesus Christ – in the priesthood or the consecrated life – we have to enter by the door! And the door is Christ! He is the one who calls, who begins, who does the work. Some people want to enter by the window… It doesn’t work that way. So please, any of you have friends who came in by the window, embrace them and tell them it would be better to leave and go serve God another way, because a work which Jesus himself did not begin, by the door, will never be brought to completion.

This should make us realize that we have been chosen: “Jesus looked at me; I was chosen”. I am always struck by the beginning of the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel: “You were the child of strangers; you were forsaken, but I passed by, I cleansed you and I took you to myself”. This is the path! This is the work which Lord began when he looked at us.

There are people who don’t know why God calls them, but they know that he has. Don’t worry: God will make you understand why he called you. Others want to follow the Lord for some benefit. We remember the mother of James and John, who said: “Lord, I beg you, when you cut the cake, give the biggest slice to my sons… Let one of them sit at your right and the other at your left”. We can be tempted to follow Jesus for ambition: ambition for money or power. All of us can say: “When I first followed Jesus, I was not like that”. But it happened to other people, and little by little, they sowed it in our heart like weeds.

In our life as disciples of Jesus, there must be no room for personal ambition, for money, for worldly importance. We follow Jesus to the very last step of his earthly life: the cross. He will make sure you rise again, but you have to keep following him to the end. I tell you this in all seriousness, because the Church is not a business or an NGO. The Church is a mystery: the mystery of Jesus, who looks at each of us and says: “Follow me”.

So let this be clear: Jesus is the one who calls. We have to enter by the door when he calls, not by the window; and we have to follow in his footsteps.

Obviously, when Jesus chooses us, he does not “canonize” us; we continue to be the same old sinners. If there is anyone here – a priest or a religious – who doesn’t think that he or she is a sinner, please raise your hand… We are all sinners, starting with me. But the tenderness and love of Jesus keep us going.

“May he who began a good work in you bring it to completion”. This is what keeps us going, what the love of Jesus began in us. Do you remember any time in the Gospel when the apostle James wept? Yes or no? Or when did the apostle John wept? Or when did any other apostle wept? The Gospel tells us that only one of the apostles wept: the one who knew that he was a sinner, so great a sinner that he betrayed his Lord. And once he realized this, he wept… Then Jesus made him the Pope! Who can understand Jesus? It’s a mystery!

So never stop weeping. When priests and religious no longer weep, something is wrong. We need to weep for our infidelity, to weep for the all the pain in our world, to weep for all those people who are cast aside, to weep for the elderly who are abandoned, for children who are killed, for the things we don’t understand. We need to weep when people ask us: “why?”. None of us has all the answers to all those questions “why?”.

A Russian writer once asked why children suffer. Whenever I see a child with cancer, a tumour or some rare disease, I too ask myself why this child has to suffer… And I don’t have an answer. I just look to Jesus on the cross. There situations in life for which we can only weep, and look to Jesus on the cross. That is the only answer we have for certain injustices, certain kinds of pain, certain situations in life.

Saint Paul told his disciples: “Remember Jesus Christ; remember Christ crucified”. Whenever a consecrated man or woman, or a priest forgets Christ crucified, sad to say, he or she falls into an ugly sin, a sin which disgusts God, which makes God vomit. It is the sin of being tepid, lukewarm. Dear priests, sisters and brothers, religious men and women, beware of falling into the sin of tepidity.

What else can I say, from my heart to yours? I would say, never stray from Jesus. In other words, never stop praying. “But Father, sometimes it’s so tiresome to pray… It wearies us. It makes us fall asleep…” So sleep before the Lord: that is also a way of praying, but stay there, stay there before him and pray! Don’t stop praying! Once consecrated persons stop praying, their souls wither; they grow ugly, like dried figs. Ugly. The soul of a man or woman religious, or a priest who doesn’t pray is an ugly soul! I’m sorry, but that’s the way it is…

I leave you with this question: Do I take away time from sleep, time from listening to the radio, watching television or reading the papers, in order to pray? Or would I rather do those other things? Prayer means being in the presence of God who began a good work and is bringing it to completion in each of you...

The last thing I would tell you – before telling you a few other things too! – is that when we let ourselves be chosen by Jesus, it is to serve: to serve the people of God, to serve the poor, men and women who are outcasts, living on the fringes of society, to serve children and the elderly. But also to serve people who are unaware of their own pride and sin, to serve Jesus in them. Letting ourselves be chosen by Jesus means letting ourselves be chosen to serve, and not to be served.

A year or so ago, there was a gathering of priests – the nuns will get off free on this one! – and during the daily spiritual exercises one group of priests had to serve tables. Some of them complained, saying: “No! We should be served; after all, we paid, we paid to be served!” Please, let us never have any of this in the Church! To serve! Not to be served or to use other people.

That is what I wanted to say, what I felt when I heard those words of Saint Paul, who trusted that the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

An elderly cardinal – actually, he is only a year older than I am! – once told me that when he goes to the cemetery and sees the graves of dedicated missionaries and religious, he wonders: “Why don’t we canonize this or that one tomorrow”, because they spent their lives in serving others. I am always moved when, after Mass, I speak with a priest or religious who tells me: “I’ve worked in this hospital, or with autistic children, or in the missions of the Amazon, or this or that other place for thirty or forty years”. I find it very moving. That man or woman understood that following Jesus means serving others, not being served by others.

So then, I thank you very much. But you are thinking: What a rude Pope this is! He told us what to do, he beat up on us, and he never thanked us for what we do. But that is what I want to do now, the last thing I want to say, the cherry, as it were, on the cake. Thank you. I thank you for your courage in following Jesus. Thank you all the times you realize that you yourselves are sinners, and for all the tender caresses which you give to those who need them. Thank you for all those times when you helped so many people to die in peace. Thank you for “burning” your lives in hope. Thank you for letting yourselves be helped and corrected and forgiven each day. And as I thank you, I also ask you not to forget to pray for me, because I need it. Thank you very much!

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(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**VISIT TO THE U.N.O.N. (UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI)**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Kenya  
Thursday, 26 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/26/kenyaunon.html)**]**

I would like to thank Madame Sahle-Work Zewde, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, for her kind invitation and words of welcome, as well as Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, and Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. I take this occasion to greet the personnel and all those associated with the institutions who are here present.

On my way to this hall, I was asked to plant a tree in the park of the United Nations Centre. I was happy to carry out this simple symbolic act, which is so meaningful in many cultures.

Planting a tree is first and foremost an invitation to continue the battle against phenomena like deforestation and desertification. It reminds us of the importance of safeguarding and responsibly administering those “richly biodiverse lungs of our planet”, which include, on this continent, “the Congo basins”, a place essential “for the entire earth and for the future of humanity”. It also points to the need to appreciate and encourage “the commitment of international agencies and civil society organizations which draw public attention to these issues and offer critical cooperation, employing legitimate means of pressure, to ensure that each government carries out its proper and inalienable responsibility to preserve its country’s environment and natural resources, without capitulating to spurious local or international interests” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 38).

Planting a tree is also an incentive to keep trusting, hoping, and above all working in practice to reverse all those situations of injustice and deterioration which we currently experience.

In a few days an important meeting on climate change will be held in Paris, where the international community as such will once again confront these issues. It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good and lead to manipulating information in order to protect their own plans and projects.

In this international context, we are confronted with a choice which cannot be ignored: either to improve or to destroy the environment. Every step we take, whether large or small, individual or collective, in caring for creation opens a sure path for that “generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings” (ibid., 211).

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all”; “climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (ibid., 23 and 25). Our response to this challenge “needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged” (ibid., 93). For “the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion” ([*Address to the United Nations*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html), 25 September 2015).

COP21 represents an important stage in the process of developing a new energy system which depends on a minimal use of fossil fuels, aims at energy efficiency and makes use of energy sources with little or no carbon content. We are faced with a great political and economic obligation to rethink and correct the dysfunctions and distortions of the current model of development.

The Paris Agreement can give a clear signal in this direction, provided that, as I stated before the UN General Assembly, we avoid “every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective” (ibid.). For this reason, I express my hope that COP21 will achieve a global and “transformational” agreement based on the principles of solidarity, justice, equality and participation; an agreement which targets three complex and interdependent goals: lessening the impact of climate change, fighting poverty and ensuring respect for human dignity.

For all the difficulties involved, there is a growing “conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 164). No country “can act independently of a common responsibility. If we truly desire positive change, we have to humbly accept our interdependence” ([*Address to Popular Movements*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html), 9 July 2015). The problem arises whenever we think of interdependence as a synonym for domination, or the subjection of some to the interests of others, of the powerless to the powerful.

What is needed is sincere and open dialogue, with responsible cooperation on the part of all: political authorities, the scientific community, the business world and civil society. Positive examples are not lacking; they demonstrate that a genuine cooperation between politics, science and business can achieve significant results.

At the same time we believe that “human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 205). This conviction leads us to hope that, whereas the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, “humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities” (ibid., 165). If this is to happen, the economy and politics need to be placed at the service of peoples, with the result that “human beings, in harmony with nature, structure the entire system of production and distribution in such a way that the abilities and needs of each individual find suitable expression in social life”. Far from an idealistic utopia, this is a realistic prospect which makes the human person and human dignity the point of departure and the goal of everything (cf. [*Address to Popular Movements*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html), 9 July 2015).

This much-needed change of course cannot take place without a substantial commitment to education and training. Nothing will happen unless political and technical solutions are accompanied by a process of education which proposes new ways of living. A new culture. This calls for an educational process which fosters in boys and girls, women and men, young people and adults, the adoption of a culture of care – care for oneself, care for others, care for the environment – in place of a culture of waste, a “throw-away culture” where people use and discard themselves, others and the environment. By promoting an “awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of the future to be shared with everyone”, we will favour the development of new convictions, attitudes and lifestyles. “A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 202). We still have time.

Many are the faces, the stories and the evident effects on the lives of thousands of persons whom the culture of deterioration and waste has allowed to be sacrificed before the idols of profits and consumption. We need to be alert to one sad sign of the “globalization of indifference”: the fact that we are gradually growing accustomed to the suffering of others, as if it were something normal (cf. [*Message for World Food Day*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/food/documents/papa-francesco_20131016_messaggio-giornata-alimentazione.html), 16 October 2013, 2), or even worse, becoming resigned to such extreme and scandalous kinds of “using and discarding” and social exclusion as new forms of slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution and trafficking in organs. “There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty aggravated by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 25). Many lives, many stories, many dreams have been shipwrecked in our day. We cannot remain indifferent in the face of this. We have no right.

Together with neglect of the environment, we have witnessed for some time now a rapid process of urbanization, which in many cases has unfortunately led to a “disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities which have become unhealthy to live in [and] inefficient” (ibid., 44). There we increasingly see the troubling symptoms of a social breakdown which spawns “increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, loss of identity” (ibid., 46), a lack of rootedness and social anonymity (cf. ibid., 149).

Here I would offer a word of encouragement to all those working on the local and international levels to ensure that the process of urbanization becomes an effective means for development and integration. This means working to guarantee for everyone, especially those living in outlying neighbourhoods, the basic rights to dignified living conditions and to land, lodging and labour. There is a need to promote projects of city planning and maintenance of public areas which move in this direction and take into consideration the views of local residents; this will help to eliminate the many instances of inequality and pockets of urban poverty which are not simply economic but also, and above all, social and environmental. The forthcoming Habitat-III Conference, planned for Quito in October 2016, could be a significant occasion for identifying ways of responding to these issues.

In a few days, Nairobi will host the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. In 1967, my predecessor Pope Paul VI, contemplating an increasingly interdependent world and foreseeing the current reality of globalization, reflected on how commercial relationships between States could prove a fundamental element for the development of peoples or, on the other hand, a cause of extreme poverty and exclusion ([*Populorum Progressio*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html), 56-62). While recognizing that much has been done in this area, it seems that we have yet to attain an international system of commerce which is equitable and completely at the service of the battle against poverty and exclusion. Commercial relationships between States, as an indispensable part of relations between peoples, can do as much to harm the environment as to renew it and preserve it for future generations.

It is my hope that the deliberations of the forthcoming Nairobi Conference will not be a simple balancing of conflicting interests, but a genuine service to care of our common home and the integral development of persons, especially those in greatest need. I would especially like to echo the concern of all those groups engaged in projects of development and health care – including those religious congregations which serve the poor and those most excluded – with regard to agreements on intellectual property and access to medicines and essential health care. Regional free trade treaties dealing with the protection of intellectual property, particularly in the areas of pharmaceutics and biotechnology, should not only maintain intact the powers already granted to States by multilateral agreements, but should also be a means for ensuring a minimum of health care and access to basic treatment for all. Multilateral discussions, for their part, should allow poorer countries the time, the flexibility and the exceptions needed for them to comply with trade regulations in an orderly and relatively smooth manner. Interdependence and the integration of economies should not bear the least detriment to existing systems of health care and social security; instead, they should promote their creation and good functioning. Certain health issues, like the elimination of malaria and tuberculosis, treatment of so-called orphan diseases, and neglected sectors of tropical medicine, require urgent political attention, above and beyond all other commercial or political interests.

Africa offers the world a beauty and natural richness which inspire praise of the Creator. This patrimony of Africa and of all mankind is constantly exposed to the risk of destruction caused by human selfishness of every type and by the abuse of situations of poverty and exclusion. In the context of economic relationships between States and between peoples, we cannot be silent about forms of illegal trafficking which arise in situations of poverty and in turn lead to greater poverty and exclusion. Illegal trade in diamonds and precious stones, rare metals or those of great strategic value, wood, biological material and animal products, such as ivory trafficking and the relative killing of elephants, fuels political instability, organized crime and terrorism. This situation too is a cry rising up from humanity and the earth itself, one which needs to be heard by the international community.

In my recent visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, I expressed the desire and hope that the work of the United Nations and of all its multilateral activities may be “the pledge of a secure and happy future for future generations. And so it will, if the representatives of the States can set aside partisan and ideological interests, and sincerely strive to serve the common good” ([*Address to the UN*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html), 25 September 2015).

Once again I express the support of the Catholic community, and my own, to continue to pray and work that the fruits of regional cooperation, expressed today in the African Union and the many African agreements on commerce, cooperation and development, may be vigorously pursued and always take into account the common good of the sons and daughters of this land.

May the blessing of the Most High be with each of you and your peoples. Thank you.

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**VISIT TO KANGEMI SLUM**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Nairobi (Kenya)  
Friday, 27 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/27/kenyakangemi.html)**]**

Thank you for welcoming me to your neighbourhood. I thank Archbishop Kivuva and Father Pascal for their kind words. I feel very much at home sharing these moments with brothers and sisters who, and I am not ashamed to say this, have a special place in my life and my decisions. I am here because I want you to know that your joys and hopes, your troubles and your sorrows, are not indifferent to me. I realize the difficulties which you experience daily! How can I not denounce the injustices which you suffer?

First of all, though, I would like to speak about something which the language of exclusion often disregards or seems to ignore. It is the wisdom found in poor neighbourhoods. A wisdom which is born of the “stubborn resistance” of that which is authentic” (cf. [*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 112), from Gospel values which an opulent society, anaesthetized by unbridled consumption, would seem to have forgotten. You are able “to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome” (ibid., 149).

The culture of poor neighbourhoods, steeped in this particular wisdom, “has very positive traits, which can offer something to these times in which we live; it is expressed in values such as solidarity, giving one’s life for others, preferring birth to death, providing Christian burial to one’s dead; finding a place for the sick in one’s home, sharing bread with the hungry (for ‘there is always room for one more seat at the table’), showing patience and strength when faced with great adversity, and so on” (Equipo de Sacerdotes para las Villas de Emergencia, Argentina, *Reflexiones sobre urbanización y la cultura villera*, 2010). Values grounded in the fact each human being is more important than the god of money. Thank you for reminding us that another type of culture is possible.

I want in first place to uphold these values which you practice, values which are not quoted in the stock exchange, are not subject to speculation, and have no market price. I congratulate you, I accompany you and I want you to know that the Lord never forgets you. The path of Jesus began on the peripheries, it goes *from* the poor and *with* the poor, towards others.

To see these signs of good living that increase daily in your midst in no way entails a disregard for the dreadful injustice of urban exclusion. These are wounds inflicted by minorities who cling to power and wealth, who selfishly squander while a growing majority is forced to flee to abandoned, filthy and run-down peripheries.

This becomes even worse when we see the unjust distribution of land (if not in this neighbourhood, certainly in others) which leads in many cases to entire families having to pay excessive and unfair rents for utterly unfit housing. I am also aware of the serious problem posed by faceless “private developers” who hoard areas of land and even attempt to appropriate the playgrounds of your children’s schools. This is what happens when we forget that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone” ([*Centesimus Annus*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html), 31).

One very serious problem in this regard is the lack of access to infrastructures and basic services. By this I mean toilets, sewers, drains, refuse collection, electricity, roads, as well as schools, hospitals, recreational and sport centres, studios and workshops for artists and craftsmen. I refer in particular to access to drinking water. “Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 30). To deny a family water, under any bureaucratic pretext whatsoever, is a great injustice, especially when one profits from this need.

This situation of indifference and hostility experienced by poor neighbourhoods is aggravated when violence spreads and criminal organizations, serving economic or political interests, use children and young people as “canon fodder” for their ruthless business affairs. I also appreciate the struggles of those women who fight heroically to protect their sons and daughters from these dangers. I ask God that that the authorities may embark, together with you, upon the path of social inclusion, education, sport, community action, and the protection of families, for this is the only guarantee of a peace that is just, authentic and enduring.

These realities which I have just mentioned are not a random combination of unrelated problems. They are a consequence of new forms of colonialism which would make African countries “parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel” ([*Ecclesia in Africa*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html), 52). Indeed, countries are frequently pressured to adopt policies typical of the culture of waste, like those aimed at lowering the birth rate, which seek “to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized” ([*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), 50).

In this regard, I would propose a renewed attention to the idea of a respectful urban integration, as opposed to elimination, paternalism, indifference or mere containment. We need integrated cities which belong to everyone. We need to go beyond the mere proclamation of rights which are not respected in practice, to implementing concrete and systematic initiatives capable of improving the overall living situation, and planning new urban developments of good quality for housing future generations. The social and environmental debt owed to the poor of cities can be paid by respecting their sacred right to the “three Ls”: Land, Lodging, Labour. This is not a question of philanthropy; rather it is a moral duty incumbent upon all of us.

I wish to call all Christians, and their pastors in particular, to renew their missionary zeal, to take initiative in the face of so many situations of injustice, to be involved in their neighbours’ problems, to accompany them in their struggles, to protect the fruits of their communitarian labour and to celebrate together each victory, large or small. I realize that you are already doing much, but I ask to remember this is not just another task; it may instead be the most important task of all, because “the Gospel is addressed in a special way to the poor” (Benedict XVI, [*Address to the Bishops of Brazil*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070511_bishops-brazil.html), 11 May 2007, 3).

Dear neighbours, dear brothers and sisters, let us together pray, work and commit ourselves to ensuring that every family has dignified housing, access to drinking water, a toilet, reliable sources of energy for lighting, cooking and improving their homes; that every neighbourhood has streets, squares, schools, hospitals, areas for sport, recreation and art; that basic services are provided to each of you; that your appeals and your pleas for greater opportunity can be heard; that all can enjoy the peace and security which they rightfully deserve on the basis of their infinite human dignity.

*Mungu awabariki*! God bless you!

And I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me.

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TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Kasarani Stadium, Nairobi (Kenya)  
Friday, 27 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/27/kenyagiovani.html)**]**

Thank you for the rosary which you prayed for me! Thank you for your presence and your enthusiasm. Thank you, Linette and Manuel, for your reflections.

There is a deeper question behind all the questions which Linette and Manuel asked me: “Why do there have to be divisions, fighting, wars, death, fanaticism and destructiveness among young people? Why do we have this thirst for self-destruction? On the first pages of the Bible, after all those wonderful things God did, a brother kills his brother. The spirit of evil leads to destructiveness; the spirit of evil leads us to disunity, to tribalism, to corruption, to drug addiction… It leads us to destruction through fanaticism.

Manuel asked me: “What can be done to prevent ideological fanaticism from robbing us of a brother or a friend?” There is a word which might seem uncomfortable, but I don’t want to avoid it because you yourselves already used it: you used it when you brought me all the rosaries which you prayed for me. The Bishop used it too, when he introduced you and said that you prepared for my visit by *prayer*. The first thing I would say, then, is that a man or a woman loses the best part of themselves, of their humanity, when they stop praying, because then they feel all-powerful, because then they don’t feel the need to ask help from the Lord in the face of all these tragedies.

Life is full of problems, but there are two ways to look at problems. You can see them as an obstacle, something which ruins you and holds you back, or else you can see them as an opportunity. It’s up to you. Do I see this problem as the path to ruin, or as an opportunity to better myself, my own situation and that of my family, my community, my country?

Dear young friends, we don’t live in the clouds; we live in this world. And this world is full of problems, of temptations to go down the wrong path. But there is something which all of you have, something you will have for a while, and that is the ability to choose which path you want to take, which of these two things you want to choose. Will I let myself be overcome by problems or will I to turn my problems into new opportunities, and win in the end?

Some of the problems you raised are real challenges. So that is my first question: do you want to overcome these challenges, or let yourselves be overcome by them? Are you going to be like those athletes who come here to the stadium in order to win, or like those who sold out, let the other side win, and then pocketed the money? You decide!

One of the challenges Linette mentioned is *tribalism*. Tribalism destroys a nation; tribalism is when you keep your hands behind your back, a stone in each one, ready to hurl against someone else. Tribalism is overcome only with the *ear*, the *heart* and the *hand*. With the *ear*, by listening: What is your culture? Why are you the way you are? Why does your tribe have this custom or way of doing things? Does your tribe feel superior or inferior? With the *heart*: After hearing your answer with my ears, I open my heart and hold out my hand so we can keep talking. Unless you dialogue and listen to one another, there will always be tribalism eating away at society like woodworms. Yesterday – you are celebrating it today – was set aside as a day of prayer and reconciliation. I would now ask all of you young people, and you, Lynette and Manuel, to come here, to hold hands with one another. Let us stand up and take each other’s hand as a sign of opposition to tribalism. We are all one nation! Let us all be one nation! That is the way we should feel, where our heart should be. Overcoming tribalism is more than just lifting up our hands today; it is a desire but also a decision. Overcoming tribalism calls for daily effort. It is something we do with our *ear:* listening to others; with our *heart*: being open to others; and with our *hands*: holding out a hand to others… And now let us hold hands with one another… “No to tribalism!”

Another question that Linette asked was about *corruption*. Deep down, she was asking me: “Can corruption be justified simply because everyone is involved in wrongdoing, everyone is corrupt? How can we be Christians and fight the evil of corruption?”

I remember, in my own country, a young person, about twenty years old, who wanted to get involved in politics. He studied, he was enthusiastic, he went from place to place, and he got a job in a government office. One day he had to make a decision about purchasing something. He had three estimates, so he reviewed them and he chose the best one. Then he went to his boss to have it approved. “Why did you choose this one?” “Because it was best for the country’s finances”. “No, no, you have to choose the one which will put more money in your pocket!” This young person told his boss: “I got into politics to help my country!”, and the boss’s answer was: “I got into politics to steal!” This is just one example. There is corruption not just in politics but in every institution, even in the Vatican. Corruption is something which creeps in. It's like sugar: it’s sweet, we like it, it’s goes down easily. And then? We get sick! We come to a nasty end! With all that easy sugar we end up as diabetics, and our country becomes diabetic!

Whenever we take a bribe, or pocket a kickback, we destroy our heart, we destroy our personality, we destroy our country. Please, don’t get used to the taste of this “sugar” which is corruption. “But Father, I see corruption everywhere, I see so many people selling themselves for a handful of money without any concern for the lives of others…” As in everything, you have to make a start. If in your heart you don’t like corruption, if you do not want corruption in your life in your country, then start now! If you don’t start, your neighbour won’t start either. Corruption also steals our joy. It robs us of peace. A corrupt person is not at peace.

Once in my city – this is a true story – a man died. Everybody knew he was a big crook. A few days later, I asked what the funeral was like. One lady who had a good sense of humour told me: “Father, they couldn’t even close the coffin, because he tried to bring with him all the money he had stolen!” Whatever you steal by corruption will stay behind and somebody else will use it. But it will also stay behind – and we need to keep this in mind – in the hearts of all those men and women who were hurt by your example of corruption. It will stay behind in all the good you could have done but never did. It will stay behind in the children who are sick or hungry because the money that was meant for them was used for your own enjoyment, because you were corrupt. Dear young people, corruption is not the way to life. It is a path which leads to death.

There was also a question about *how to use the communications media* to spread Christ’s message of hope and to help people see how right it is. The primary means of communication is the word, a gesture, a smile. The first gesture of communication is going up to someone, seeking their friendship. If you speak well of one another, if you laugh, if you draw close to one another as brothers and sisters even though you belong to different tribes, if you are close to those in need, the poor, the lonely, the elderly whom no one visits… If you are close to them, those little signs of communication are more influential than any television network.

In answering all these questions, I said something which I hope can help you. Turn often to Jesus in prayer; ask the Lord to give you the strength to eliminate tribalism, and to be brothers and sisters to one another. Pray for the courage not to be corrupted, to want to treat one another as brothers and sisters with a smile, a good word, a gesture of help, by your closeness.

Manuel too, in his witness talk, asked some hard questions. I’m concerned about the first thing he said: “What can we do to stop the *recruitment* of our family and friends? What can we do to make them come home? To answer this, we need to know why a young person, full of dreams and hopes, would want to be recruited or try to be recruited. He leaves his family, his friends, his tribe, his country. He cuts himself off from life because he learns to kill… This is a question which you will also have to ask your leaders. If a young person, if a boy or girl, if a man or a woman, has no job, and cannot study, what can he or she do? They can get involved in crime, or forms of addiction, or even kill themselves – in Europe, they do not publish statistics on suicides – or they can sign up for something which gives them a purpose in life, however deceptive…

The first thing we have to do to prevent a young person from being recruited, or attempting to recruit, is *education and employment*. If a young person does not have work, what future is in store for him or her? That is where the idea of being recruited comes from. If a young person has no chance to receive an education, or even a little training for ordinary jobs, what can he or she do? That’s where the danger lies! It is a danger for society, one bigger than ourselves, even bigger than the country, because it depends on an international system which is unjust, which is centred on economy and not people, on mammon, the god of money. What can I do to help them or to make them come back? First of all, pray. But pray hard! God is more powerful than any recruitment campaign. Then what? Speak to that person with affection, with kindness, with love and patience. Invite him to see a football game, to take a walk, be part of the group. Don’t leave him out. This is the first thing that comes to my mind.

Certainly, there are – and this is your second question – there are some ways of acting which are harmful, where we run after fleeting pleasures but end up getting hurt. The question you asked me, Manuel, sounds like the question of a theology professor: “How can we realize that God is our Father? How can wesee God’s hand in the tragedies of life? How we find God's peace?” This question is asked by men and women the world over in one way or another. And they don’t come up with an answer. There are some questions to which, no matter how hard we try, we never seem to find an answer. “How can I see the hand of God in one of life’s tragedies?” There is only one answer: no, there is no answer. There is only a way: *to look to the Son of God*. God delivered his Son to save us all. God let himself get hurt. God let himself be destroyed on the cross. So when the moment comes when you don’t understand, when you’re in despair and the world is tumbling down all around you, *look to the cross*! There we see the failure of God; there we see the destruction of God. But there we also see a challenge to our faith: the challenge of hope. Because that story didn’t end in failure. There was the *resurrection*, which made all things new.

I’ll tell you a secret – but aren’t you hungry? It’s already noon! No? – well then, I’ll tell you a secret. In my pocket I always carry two things: a rosary, to pray, and something else which may seem a little odd… What is it? It’s the story of God’s failure: it is a little Way of the Cross, the story of how Jesus suffered from the time he was condemned to death until his burial. With these two things, I try to do my best. But thanks to these two things I don’t lose hope.

One final question from Manuel, our “theologian”: “What do you have to say to those young people who have not experienced love in their own families? How can they move beyond this?” Everywhere there are young people who were abandoned, either at birth or later on, by their family, their parents, and so they have never known the love of a family. That is why families are so important. Protect the family! Defend it always. All around us, there are not only abandoned children, but also abandoned elderly persons, who have no one to visit them, to show them affection… How do you overcome this negative experience of being abandoned, of not being loved? There is only one remedy: to give what you have not received. If you have not received understanding, then show understanding to others. If you have not received love, then show love to others. If you have known loneliness, then try to be close to others who are lonely. Flesh is cured with flesh! And God took flesh in order to heal us. So let us do the same with others.

Well, then, before the referee blows the whistle for the end of the game, I think it is time to conclude. I thank you from my heart for being here and for letting me speak to you in my mother tongue… I thank you for all those rosaries you prayed for me. And please, keep praying for me, because I need it very much! Now, before we leave, I ask you please to stand, all of you, and together we can pray to our heavenly Father, who only has one flaw: he can’t help but be our Father!

Our Father….

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TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Conference Hall of the State House, Entebbe (Uganda)  
Friday, 27 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/27/ugandaautorita.html)**]**

*Mr President,  
Honourable Members of Government,  
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
My Brother Bishops,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I thank you for your gracious welcome, and I am happy to be in Uganda. My visit to your country is meant above all to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the canonization of the Uganda Martyrs by my predecessor, Pope Paul VI. But I hope that my presence here will also be seen as a sign of friendship, esteem and encouragement for all the people of this great nation.

The Martyrs, both Catholic and Anglican, are true national heroes. They bear witness to the guiding principles expressed in Uganda’s motto – *For God and My Country*. They remind us of the importance that faith, moral rectitude and commitment to the common good have played, and continue to play, in the cultural, economic and political life of this country. They also remind us that, despite our different beliefs and convictions, all of us are called to seek the truth, to work for justice and reconciliation, and to respect, protect and help one another as members of our one human family. These high ideals are particularly demanded of men and women like yourselves, who are charged with ensuring good and transparent governance, integral human development, a broad participation in national life, as well as a wise and just distribution of the goods which the Creator has so richly bestowed upon these lands.

My visit is also meant to draw attention to Africa as a whole, its promise, its hopes, its struggles and its achievements. The world looks to Africa as the continent of hope. Uganda has indeed been blessed by God with abundant natural resources, which you are challenged to administer as responsible stewards. But above all, the nation has been blessed in its people: its strong families, its young and its elderly. I look forward to my meeting tomorrow with the young, for whom I will have words of encouragement and challenge. How important it is that they be given hope, opportunities for education and gainful employment, and above all the opportunity to share fully in the life of society. But I also wish to mention the blessing which you have in the elderly. They are the living memory of every people. Their wisdom and experience should always be valued as a compass which can enable society to find the right direction in confronting the challenges of the present with integrity, wisdom and vision.

Here in East Africa, Uganda has shown outstanding concern for welcoming refugees, enabling them to rebuild their lives in security and to sense the dignity which comes from earning one’s livelihood through honest labour. Our world, caught up in wars, violence, and various forms of injustice, is witnessing an unprecedented movement of peoples. How we deal with them is a test of our humanity, our respect for human dignity, and above all our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need.

Although my visit is brief, I hope to encourage the many quiet efforts being made to care for the poor, the sick and those in any kind of trouble. It is in these small signs that we see the true soul of a people. In so many ways, our world is growing closer; yet at the same time we see with concern the globalization of a “throwaway culture” which blinds us to spiritual values, hardens our hearts before the needs of the poor, and robs our young of hope.

As I look forward to meeting you and spending this time with you, I pray that you, and all the beloved Ugandan people, will always prove worthy of the values which have shaped the soul of your nation. Upon all of you I invoke the Lord’s richest blessings.

*Mungu awabariki!*

*God bless you!*

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**VISIT TO MUNYONYO AND GREETING TO CATECHISTS AND TEACHERS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Kampala (Uganda)  
Friday, 27 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/27/ugandacatechisti.html)**]**

*Dear Catechists and Teachers, Dear Friends,*

I greet you with affection in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Teacher.

“Teacher!” What a beautiful name this is! Jesus is our first and greatest teacher. Saint Paul tells us that Jesus gave his Church not only apostles and pastors, but also teachers, to build up the whole body in faith and love. Together with the bishops, priests and deacons who are ordained to preach the Gospel and care for the Lord’s flock, you, as catechists, play an outstanding part in bringing the Good News to every village and homestead in your country. You were chosen for the ministry of catechesis.

I wish before all else, to *thank you* for the sacrifices which you and your families make, and for the zeal and devotion with which you carry out your important task. You teach what Jesus taught, you instruct adults and help parents to raise their children in the faith, and you bring the joy and hope of eternal life to all. Thank you for your dedication, your example, your closeness to God’s people in their daily lives, and all the many ways you plant and nurture the seeds of faith throughout this vast land. Thank you especially for teaching our children and young people how to pray. For teaching children how to pray is a fine and important work.

I know that your work, although rewarding, is not easy. So I encourage you to persevere, and I ask your bishops and priests to support you with a doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral formation capable of making you ever more effective in your outreach. Even when the task seems too much, the resources too few, the obstacles too great, it should never be forgotten that yours is a holy work. I want to emphasize this: yours is a holy work. The Holy Spirit is present wherever the name of Christ is proclaimed. He is in our midst whenever we lift up our hearts and minds to God in prayer. He will give you the light and strength you need! The message you bring will take root all the more firmly in people’s hearts if you are not only a teacher but also a witness. This too is very important: you must be teachers, but this is not enough; you also have to be witnesses. Your example should speak to everyone of the beauty of prayer, the power of mercy and forgiveness, the joy of sharing in the Eucharist with all our brothers and sisters.

The Christian community in Uganda grew strong through the witness of the martyrs. They testified to the truth which sets men free; they were willing to shed their blood to be faithful to what they knew was good and beautiful and true. We stand here today in Munyonyo at the place where King Mwanga determined to wipe out the followers of Christ. He failed in this, just as King Herod failed to kill Jesus. The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it (cf. *Jn* 1:5). After seeing the fearless testimony of Saint Andrew Kaggwa and his companions, Christians in Uganda became even more convinced of Christ’s promises.

May Saint Andrew, your patron, and all the Ugandan catechist martyrs, obtain for you the grace to be wise teachers, men and women whose every word is filled with grace, convincing witnesses to the splendour of God’s truth and the joy of the Gospel! Witnesses of holiness. Go forth without fear to every town and village in this country, tospread the good seed of God’s word, and trust in his promise that you will come back rejoicing, with sheaves full from the harvest. I ask all of you, dear catechists, to pray for me, but also to have your children pray for me.

*Omukama Abawe Omukisa! (God bless you!)*

[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**HOLY MASS FOR THE MARTYRS OF UGANDA**

***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Area of the Catholic Shrine of the Martyrs of Namugongo (Uganda)  
Saturday, 28 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/28/ugandamartiri.html)**]**

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (*Acts* 1:8).

From the age of the Apostles to our own day, a great cloud of witnesses has been raised up to proclaim Jesus and show forth the power of the Holy Spirit. Today, we recall with gratitude the sacrifice of the Uganda martyrs, whose witness of love for Christ and his Church has truly gone “to the end of the earth”. We remember also the Anglican martyrs whose deaths for Christ testify to the ecumenism of blood. All these witnesses nurtured the gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives and freely gave testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ, even at the cost of their lives, many at such a young age.

We too have received the gift of the Spirit, to make us sons and daughters of God, but also so that we may bear witness to Jesus and make him everywhere known and loved. We received the Spirit when we were reborn in Baptism, and we were strengthened by his gifts at our Confirmation. Every day we are called to deepen the Holy Spirit’s presence in our life, to “fan into flame” the gift of his divine love so that we may be a source of wisdom and strength to others.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift which is meant to be shared. It unites us to one another as believers and living members of Christ’s mystical Body. We do not receive the gift of the Spirit for ourselves alone, but to build up one another in faith, hope and love. I think of Saints Joseph Mkasa and Charles Lwanga, who after being catechized by others, wanted to pass on the gift they had received. They did this in dangerous times. Not only were their lives threatened but so too were the lives of the younger boys under their care. Because they had tended to their faith and deepened their love of God, they were fearless in bringing Christ to others, even at the cost of their lives. Their faith became witness; today, venerated as martyrs, their example continues to inspire people throughout the world. They continue to proclaim Jesus Christ and the power of his Cross.

If, like the martyrs, we daily fan into flame the gift of the Spirit who dwells in our hearts, then we will surely become the missionary disciples which Christ calls us to be. To our families and friends certainly, but also to those whom we do not know, especially those who might be unfriendly, even hostile, to us. This openness to others begins first in the family, in our homes where charity and forgiveness are learned, and the mercy and love of God made known in our parents’ love. It finds expression too in our care for the elderly and the poor, the widowed and the orphaned.

The witness of the martyrs shows to all who have heard their story, then and now, that the worldly pleasures and earthly power do not bring lasting joy or peace. Rather, fidelity to God, honesty and integrity of life, and genuine concern for the good of others bring us that peace which the world cannot give. This does not diminish our concern for this world, as if we only look to the life to come. Instead, it gives purpose to our lives in this world, and helps us to reach out to those in need, to cooperate with others for the common good, and to build a more just society which promotes human dignity, defends God’s gift of life and protects the wonders of nature, his creation and our common home.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the legacy which you have received from the Uganda martyrs – lives marked by the power of the Holy Spirit, lives which witness even now to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This legacy is not served by an occasional remembrance, or by being enshrined in a museum as a precious jewel. Rather, we honour them, and all the saints, when we carry on their witness to Christ, in our homes and neighbourhoods, in our workplaces and civil society, whether we never leave our homes or we go to the farthest corner of the world.

May the Uganda martyrs, together with Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for us, and may the Holy Spirit kindle within us the fire of his divine love!

*Omukama Abawe Omukisa! (God bless you!)*

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(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Kololo Air Strip, Kampala (Uganda)  
Saturday, 28 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/28/ugandagiovani.html)**]**

I listened with a sad heart to what Winnie and Emmanuel told us. But as I was listening, I started to think: “Can a negative experience prove meaningful in our lives? The answer is “Yes!” Both Emmanuel and Winnie had bad experiences. Winnie thought she had no future, that life had put up a wall in front of her, and yet Jesus helped her to realize that in life a great miracle can take place: a wall can turn into a horizon, a horizon which opens up the future before me.

When we have a negative experience – and many people here, many of us here, have had negative experiences – it is always possible to open up a horizon, to open it up by the power of Jesus. Today, Winnie has turned her depression, her bitterness, into hope. This is not magic; it is the work of Jesus, because Jesus is the Lord. Jesus can do anything. Jesus himself suffered the most negative experience of all: he was insulted, he was rejected, and he was killed. But by God’s power Jesus rose from the dead. He can do the same for each of us, with our negative experiences, because he is Lord.

I can imagine – let us all try to imagine – how Emmanuel suffered when he saw his classmates tortured and killed. Emmanuel was brave, he took heart. He knew that if they found him on the day he escaped, they would kill him. He took a risk, he trusted in Jesus and he escaped. And today, fourteen years later, here he is, a graduate in administrative sciences. There is always a way. Our life is like a seed: to live, we have to die; at times even physically, like Emmanuel’s companions, like Charles Lwanga and the Ugandan martyrs. But this death brings life, a life for all. If I turn something negative into something positive, I win! But that can only happen with the grace of Jesus. Do you believe this? ... I don’t hear anything... Do you believe this? [the young people respond: “*Yes!*”] Are you ready to change everything negative in your life into something positive? [“*Yes!*”] Are you ready to turn hatred into love? [“*Yes!*”] Are you ready to want to turn war into peace? [“*Yes!*”] Never forget that you are a people of martyrs, that the blood of martyrs runs through your veins, and that is why you have the faith and the life which are yours. And this faith and this life, beautiful as they are, make this “the pearl of Africa”.

It looks like the microphone was not functioning properly. Sometimes we don’t function so well either. Yes or no? [*Yes*!] And when we don’t function well, to whom should we go to ask for help? I can’t hear! Louder! To Jesus! Jesus can change your life. Jesus can tear down all the walls in your path. Jesus can make your life a form of service to others.

Some of you may ask me: “Is there a magic wand for all this?” If you want Jesus to change your life, just ask him for help. And this is called praying. Do you understand this? Pray! Let me ask you: do you pray? Really? Pray to Jesus, because he is the Saviour. Never stop praying! Prayer is the most powerful weapon a young person has. Jesus loves us. Let me ask you: does Jesus love some people and not others? [*No!*] Does Jesus love everyone? [*Yes!*] Does Jesus want to help everyone? [*Yes!*] Well then, open the door of your heart and let him come in! Let Jesus into your life. And when Jesus enters your life, he is going to fight for you. He is going to fight all those problems that Winnie mentioned. He is going to fight depression and AIDS. Ask him to help you overcome these situations, but always keep fighting. Fight with hope and with prayer. Are you ready to fight? [*Yes!*] Are you ready to desire the best for yourselves? [*Yes!*] Are you ready to pray, to ask Jesus to help you in the fight? [*Yes!*]

There is a third thing which I want to tell you. All of us are in the Church, we belong to the Church. Right? [*Yes!*] And the Church has a Mother. What is her name? I can’t hear you... [*Mary!*] Pray to Mother Mary. When a child falls, he feels sorry for himself, and starts crying and looks for his mother. When we have a problem, the best thing that we can do is go to our Mother and pray to her. Right? [*Yes!*] Do you pray to Our Lady, to our Mother? [*Yes!*]

So then, three things: overcome problems; change the negative into the positive; and pray. Pray to Jesus who can do everything, to Jesus who comes into our hearts and changes our life, to Jesus who came to save me and who gave his life for me. Pray to Jesus because he alone is Lord. And because in the Church we are not orphans, but have a Mother, pray to our Mother. And what is our Mother’s name? [*Mary!*] Louder! [*Mary!*]

Thank you very much for listening. I thank you because you want to turn the negative into the positive; because you want to fight evil with Jesus at your side; and above all, because you want to keep praying. And now I invite you to join me in praying to our Mother for her protection. Can we do this?[*Yes!*] All together? [*Yes!*]

And please, one last request. Pray for me, I need it. Don’t forget to pray for me!

**Prepared address by the Holy Father:**

*Holy Father: Omukama Mulungi! (God is good!)  
Young people:* *Obudde bwonna! (For ever and ever!)*

*Dear Young Friends,*

I am happy to be here and to share these moments with you. I greet my brother bishops and the civil authorities present, and I thank Bishop Paul Ssemogerere for his words of welcome. The testimonies of Winnie and Emmanuel confirm my impression that the Church in Uganda is alive with young people who want a better future. Today, if you will allow me, I want to confirm you in your faith, encourage you in your love, and in a special way, strengthen you in your hope.

Christian hope is not simply optimism; it is much more. It is rooted in the new life we have received in Jesus Christ. Saint Paul tells us that hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit at our baptism (cf. *Rom* 5:5). This hope enables us to trust in Christ’s promises, to trust in the power of his love, his forgiveness, his friendship. That love opens the door to new life. Whenever you experience a problem, a setback, a failure, you must anchor your heart in that love, for it has the power to turn death into life and to banish every evil.

So this afternoon I would invite you, first of all, to pray for this gift to grow within you, and for the grace to become messengers of hope. There are so many people around us who experience deep anxiety and even despair. Jesus lifts these clouds, if we allow him to.

I would also like to share with you a few thoughts about some of the obstacles which you may encounter on our journey of hope. All of you want a better future, employment, health and prosperity. This is good. You want to share your gifts, your aspirations and your enthusiasm with others, for the good of the nation and of the Church. This too is very good. But when you see poverty, when you experience lack of opportunity, when you experience failure in your lives, sometimes a feeling of despair can grow. You can be tempted to lose hope.

Have you ever seen a little child who stops in front of a dirty puddle on the path ahead of him? A puddle he cannot leap over or go around? He may try but then he stumbles and gets soaked. Then, after many attempts, he calls out to his father, who takes his hand and swings him over to the other side. We are like that child. Life presents us with many dirty puddles. But we don’t have to overcome all those problems and hurdles on our own. God is there to take our hand, if only we call on him.

What I am saying is that all of us have to be like that little child, even the Pope! For it is only when we are small and humble that we are not afraid to call out to our Father. If you have experienced his help, you know what I am speaking about. We need to learn to put our hope in him, knowing that he is always there for us. He gives us confidence and courage. But – and this is important – it would be wrong not to share this beautiful experience with others. It would be wrong for us not to become messengers of hope for others.

There is one particular puddle which can be frightening to young people who want to grow in their friendship with Christ. It is the fear of failing in our commitment to love, and above all, failing in that great and lofty ideal which is Christian marriage. You may be afraid of failing to be a good wife and mother, failing to be a good husband and father. If you are looking at that puddle, you may even see your weaknesses and fears reflected back to you. Please, don’t give in to them! Sometimes these fears come from the devil who does not want you to be happy. No! Call out to God, extend your hearts to him and he will lift you in his arms and show you how to love. I ask young couples in particular to trust that God wants to bless their love and their lives with his grace in the sacrament of marriage. God’s gift of love is at the heart of Christian marriage, not the costly parties which often obscure the deep spiritual meaning of this day of joyful celebration with family and friends.

Finally, one puddle that we all have to face is the fear of being different, of going against the grain in a society which puts increasing pressure on us to embrace models of gratification and consumption alien to the deepest values of African culture. Think about it! What would the Uganda martyrs say about the misuse of our modern means of communication, where young people are exposed to images and distorted views of sexuality that degrade human dignity, leading to sadness and emptiness? What would be the Uganda martyrs’ reaction to the growth of greed and corruption in our midst? Surely they would appeal to you to be model Christians, confident that your love of Christ, your fidelity to the Gospel, and your wise use of your God-given gifts can only enrich, purify and elevate the life of this country. They continue to show you the way. Do not be afraid to let the light of your faith shine in your families, your schools and your places of work. Do not be afraid to enter into dialogue humbly with others who may see things differently.

Dear young friends, when I look at your faces I am filled with hope: hope for you, hope for your country, and hope for the Church. I ask you to pray that the hope which you have received from the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire your efforts to grow in wisdom, generosity and goodness. Don’t forget to be messengers of that hope! And don’t forget that God will help you to cross whatever puddles you meet along the way!

Hope in Christ and he will enable you to find true happiness. And if you find it hard to pray, if you find it hard to hope, do not be afraid to turn to Mary, for she is our Mother, the Mother of Hope. Finally, please, do not forget to pray for me! God bless you all!

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(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**VISIT TO THE HOUSE OF CHARITY OF NALUKOLONGO**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Kampala (Uganda)  
Saturday, 28 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/28/ugandacasacarita.html)**]**

*Dear Friends,*

Thank you for your warm welcome. I wanted very much to visit this House of Charity, which Cardinal Nsubuga founded here in Nalukolongo. This is a place which has always been associated with the Church’s outreach to the poor, the handicapped, the sick. Here, in early times, slave children were ransomed and women received religious instruction. I greet the Good Samaritan Sisters who carry on this fine tradition, and I thank them for their years of quiet and joyful service in this apostolate. And here, Jesus is present here, because he said that he would always be present among the poor, the sick, convicts, the destitute, those who suffer. Jesus is here.

I also greet the representatives of the many other apostolic groups who serve the needs of our brothers and sisters in Uganda. Above all, I greet the residents of this home and others like it, and all who benefit from these works of Christian charity. For this is a home. Here you can find love and care; here you can feel the presence of Jesus, our brother, who loves each of us with God’s own love.

Today, from this Home, I appeal to all parishes and communities in Uganda – and the rest of Africa – not to forget the poor, not to forget the poor! The Gospel commands us to go out to the peripheries of society, and to find Christ in the suffering and those in need. The Lord tells us, in no uncertain terms, that is what he will judge us on! How sad it is when our societies allow the elderly to be rejected or neglected! How wrong it is when the young are exploited by the modern-day slavery of human trafficking! If we look closely at the world around us, it seems that, in many places, selfishness and indifference are spreading. How many of our brothers and sisters are victims of today’s throwaway culture, which breeds contempt above all towards the unborn, the young and the elderly!

As Christians, we cannot simply stand by, stand by watching what is happening, without doing anything. Something must change! Our families need to become ever more evident signs of God’s patient and merciful love, not only for our children and elders, but for all those in need. Our parishes must not close their doors, or their ears, to the cry of the poor. This is the royal road of Christian discipleship. In this way we bear witness to the Lord who came not to be served, but to serve. In this way we show that people count more than things, that who we are is more important than what we possess. For in those whom we serve, Christ daily reveals himself and prepares the welcome which we hope one day to receive in his eternal kingdom.

Dear friends, by simple gestures, by simple prayerful actions which honour Christ in the least of his brothers and sisters, we can bring the power of his love into our world, and truly change it. I thank you once more for your generosity and love. I will remember you always in my prayers and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I commend all of you to the loving protection of Mary, our Mother, and I give you my blessing.

*Omukama Abakuume! (God protect you!)*

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(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH PRIESTS, MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*St Mary's Cathedral, Kampala (Uganda)  
Saturday, 28 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/28/ugandareligiosi.html)**]**

I gave the bishop in charge of consecrated life [the message I wrote for you](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151128_uganda-religiosi.html#Prepared_address), so it can be published. With your pardon I will speak in my native tongue, since I don’t speak English.

There are three things I want to tell you. First, in the book of Deuteronomy Moses keeps telling the people: “Don’t forget!”. And repeats this at various times throughout the book: Don’t forget! Don't forget all that God has done for his people!

So the first thing I want to tell you is this: ask for, and preserve, the grace of remembrance, of memory. I told the young people that the blood of the martyrs runs in the veins of the Catholics of Uganda. Don’t ever forget that! That way you will keep the faith. The biggest enemy of remembrance is forgetfulness, but it is not the most dangerous one. The most dangerous enemy of remembrance is when we take for granted everything we have received, everything that has been passed down to us. The Church in Uganda must never let the memory of those martyrs fade. A martyr is a witness. To remain faithful to that memory, the Church in Uganda has to continue to bear witness; you must not just live off this legacy. Past glories were a beginning, but you are called to create future glories. This is what the Church asks of you. Be witnesses like the martyrs, who gave their lives for the Gospel.

To be witnesses – and this is the second thing I want to say – we need to be faithful. Faithful to remembrance, faithful to our vocation, faithful to apostolic zeal. Fidelity means persevering on the path of holiness. Perhaps here in Uganda there are some dioceses with many priests and others with few. Fidelity means telling the bishop that you are willing to go to another diocese which needs missionaries. And that is not easy. Fidelity means persevering in our vocation. Here I think in a special way of the example of fidelity which the Sisters of the House of Charity gave me: fidelity to the poor, the sick, those in greatest need, because that is where we find Christ. Uganda was watered by the blood of martyrs, witnesses. Today, it still needs to be watered, in order to rise to new challenges, new forms of witness, new missions. Otherwise, the great treasure you possess will be lost and the “Pearl of Africa” will end up like a museum piece, because this is the way the devil attacks us – slowly but surely. Here I am speaking not only to priests but to religious as well. What I said to the priests had to do in a special way with the problem of *missionary spirit*: that dioceses with many priests should offer some to those with less clergy; in this way Uganda will keep alive the missionary spirit.

Remembrance means fidelity, and fidelity is only possible with prayer. Once a religious or a priest stops praying or prays too little, because he says he has too much work, he has already begun to lose his memory; she has already begun to lose her fidelity. Prayer also means humility. The humility to see our confessor regularly and to confess our sins. You cannot limp with both legs! We religious and priests cannot lead a double life. If you sin, ask God’s forgiveness! But don’t keep covering up those things that God does not love, don’t hide your lack of fidelity, don’t put your memory in a drawer.

Remembrance amid new challenges, fidelity to memory and fidelity to prayer – a prayer which always begins with the acknowledgment that we are sinners. With these three pillars, the “Pearl of Africa” will continue to be a pearl and not just an empty word. May the Martyrs who gave this Church its strength help you to persevere in remembrance, fidelity and prayer. And I ask you, please, remember to pray for me. Thank you very much

Now, I invite you to pray together a “Hail Mary” to Our Lady.

**Prepared address by the Holy Father:**

*Dear Brother Priests, Religious and Seminarians,*

I am happy to be with you, and I thank you for your cordial welcome. I especially thank the speakers for bearing witness to your hopes and concerns, and, above all, the joy which inspires you in your service to God’s people in Uganda.

I am pleased, too, that our meeting takes place on the eve of the First Sunday of Advent, a season which invites us to look to *new beginnings*. This Advent we are also preparing to cross the threshold of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy which I have called for the whole Church.

As we approach the Jubilee of Mercy, I would ask you two questions. First: *who are you*, as priests or future priests, and as consecrated persons? In one sense, the answer is an easy one: surely you are men and women whose lives have been shaped by a “personal encounter with Jesus Christ” ([*Evangelii Gaudium*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 3). Jesus has touched your hearts, called you by name, and asked you to follow him with an undivided heart in the service of his holy people.

The Church in Uganda has been blessed, in its short yet venerable history, with a great cloud of witnesses – lay faithful, catechists, priests and religious – who forsook everything for the love of Jesus: homes, families, and, in the case of the martyrs, their own lives. In your own lives, whether in the priestly ministry or in your religious consecration, you are called to carry on this great legacy, above all with quiet acts of humble service. Jesus wants to use you to touch the hearts of yet other people: he wants to use your mouths to proclaim his saving word, your arms to embrace the poor whom he loves, your hands to build up communities of authentic missionary disciples. May we never forget that our “yes” to Jesus is a “yes” to his people. Our doors, the doors of our churches, but above all the doors of our hearts, must constantly be open to God’s people, our people. For that is who we are.

A second question I would ask you tonight is: *What more are you called to do* in living your specific vocation? Because there is always more that we can do, another mile to be walked on our journey.

God’s people, indeed all people, yearn for new life, forgiveness and peace. Sadly, there are many troubling situations in our world for which we must pray, beginning with realities closest to us. I pray especially for the beloved people of Burundi, that the Lord may awaken in their leaders and in society as a whole a commitment to dialogue and cooperation, reconciliation and peace. If we are to accompany those who suffer, then like the light passing through the stained glass windows of this Cathedral, we must let God’s power and healing pass through us. We must first let the waves of his mercy flow over us, purify us, and refresh us, so that we can bring that mercy to others, especially those on the peripheries.

All of us know well how difficult this can be. There is so much work to be done. At the same time, modern life also offers so many distractions which can dull our consciences, dissipate our zeal, and even lure us into that “spiritual worldliness” which eats away at the foundations of the Christian life. The work of conversion – that conversion which is the heart of the Gospel of Jesus (cf. *Mk* 1:15) – must be carried out each day, in the battle to recognize and overcome those habits and ways of thinking which can fuel spiritual complacency. We need to examine our consciences, as individuals and as communities.

As I mentioned, we are entering the season of Advent, which is a time of new beginnings. In the Church we like to say that Africa is the continent of hope, and with good reason. The Church in these lands is blessed with an abundant harvest of religious vocations. This evening I would offer a special word of encouragement to the young seminarians and religious present. The Lord’s call is a source of joy and a summons to serve. Jesus tells us that “it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks” (*Lk* 6:45). May the fire of the Holy Spirit purify your hearts, so that you can be joyful and convincing witnesses to the hope of the Gospel. You have a beautiful word to speak! May you always speak it, above all, by the integrity and conviction of your lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, my visit to Uganda is brief, and today was a very long day! But I consider our meeting tonight to be the crowning of this beautiful day when I was able to go as a pilgrim to the Shrine of the Uganda Martyrs at Namugongo, and to meet with the many young people who are the future of the nation and our Church. Truly I leave Africa with great hope in the harvest of grace which God is preparing in your midst! I ask all of you to pray for an outpouring of apostolic zeal, for joyful perseverance in the calling you have received, and, above all, for the gift of a pure heart ever open to the needs of all our brothers and sisters. In this way the Church in Uganda will truly prove worthy of its glorious heritage and face the challenges of the future with sure hope in Christ’s promises. I will remember all of you in my prayers, and I ask you, please, to pray for me!

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Presidential Palace, Bangui (Central African Republic)  
Sunday, 29 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/29/repcentrafricanaautorita.html)**]**

*Madam Interim President,  
Distinguished Authorities,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Representatives of International Organizations,  
My Brother Bishops,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am happy to be here with you. I would first like to express my appreciation for your warm hospitality and to thank Madam Interim President for her kind words of welcome. I was touched, Madam President, by what you said, and I thank you very much for this very gracious Christian witness. In this place, which is in some sense the home of all Central Africans, I am pleased to express, through you and the other authorities of the country present, my affection and spiritual closeness to all your fellow citizens. I would like also to greet the members of the Diplomatic Corps and the representatives of the International Organizations, whose work recalls the ideal of solidarity and cooperation which needs to be cultivated between peoples and nations.

As the Central African Republic progressively moves, in spite of difficulties, towards the normalization of its social and political life, I come to this land for the first time, following my predecessor [Saint John Paul II](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en.html). I come as a pilgrim of peace and an apostle of hope. For this reason, I express my appreciation of the efforts made by the different national and international authorities, beginning with Madam Interim President, to guide the country to this point. It is my fervent wish that the various national consultations to be held in coming weeks will enable the country to embark serenely on new chapter of its history.

To brighten the horizon, there is the motto of the Central African Republic, which translates the hope of pioneers and the dream of the founding fathers: Unity-Dignity-Labour. Today, more than ever, this trilogy expresses the aspirations of each Central African. Consequently, it is a sure compass for the authorities called to guide the destiny of the country. Unity, dignity, labour! Three very significant words, each of which represents as much a building project as a unending programme, something to be ceaselessly crafted.

First unity. This, we know, is a cardinal value for the harmony of peoples. It is to be lived and built up on the basis of the marvellous diversity of our environment, avoiding the temptation of fear of others, of the unfamiliar, of what is not part of our ethnic group, our political views or our religious confession. Unity, on the contrary, calls for creating and promoting a synthesis of the richness which each person has to offer. Unity in diversity is a constant challenge, one which demands creativity, generosity, self-sacrifice and respect for others.

Then, dignity. This moral value is rightly synonymous with the honesty, loyalty, graciousness and honour which characterize men and women conscious of their rights and duties, and which lead them to mutual respect. Each person has dignity. I was interested to learn that Central Africa is the country of the *“Zo kwe zo”*, the country where everbody is somebody. Everything must be done to protect the status and dignity of the human person. Those who have the means to enjoy a decent life, rather than being concerned with privileges, must seek to help those poorer than themselves to attain dignified living conditions, particularly through the development of their human, cultural, economic and social potential. Consequently, access to education and to health care, the fight against malnutrition and efforts to ensure decent housing for everyone must be at the forefront of a development concerned for human dignity. In effect, our human dignity is expressed by our working for the dignity of our fellow man.

Finally, labour. It is by working that you are able to improve the lives of your families. Saint Paul tells us that “children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children” (*2 Cor* 12:14). The work of parents expresses their love for their children. And you again, Central Africans, can improve this marvellous land by wisely exploiting its many resources. Your country is located in a region considered to be one of the two lungs of mankind on account of its exceptionally rich biodiversity. In this regard, echoing my Encyclical[*Laudato Si’*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), I would like particularly to draw the attention of everyone, citizens and national leaders, international partners and multinational societies, to their grave responsibility in making use of environmental resources, in development decisions and projects which in any way affect the entire planet. The work of building a prosperous society must be a cooperative effort. The wisdom of your people has long understood this truth, as seen in the proverb: “The ants are little, but since they are so many, they can bring their hoard home”.

It is no doubt superfluous to underline the capital importance of upright conduct and administration on the part of public authorities. They must be the first to embody consistently the values of unity, dignity and labour, serving as models for their compatriots.

The history of the evangelization of this land and the sociopolitical history of this country attest to the commitment of the Church in promoting the values of unity, dignity and labour. In recalling the pioneers of evangelization in the Central African Republic, I greet my brother bishops, who now carry on this work. With them, I express once more the readiness of the local Church to contribute even more to the promotion of the common good, particularly by working for peace and reconciliation. I do not doubt that the Central African authorities, present and future, will work tirelessly to ensure that the Church enjoys favourable conditions for the fulfilment of her spiritual mission. In this way she will be able to contribute increasingly to “promoting the good of every man and of the whole man” ([*Populorum Progressio*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html), 14), to use the felicitous expression of my predecessor, [Blessed Paul VI](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en.html), who fifty years ago was the first Pope of modern times to come to Africa, to encourage and confirm the continent in goodness at the dawn of a new age.

For my part, I express my appreciation for the efforts made by the international community, represented here by the Diplomatic Corps and the members of the various Missions of the International Organizations. I heartily encourage them to continue along the path of solidarity, in the hope that their commitment, together with the activity of the Central African authorities, will help the country to advance, especially in the areas of reconciliation, disarmament, peacekeeping, health care and the cultivation of a sound administration at all levels.

To conclude, I would like to express once more my joy to visit this marvellous country, located in the heart of Africa, home to a people profoundly religious and blessed with so such natural and cultural richness. Here I see a country filled with God’s gifts! May the Central African people, its leaders and its partners, always appreciate the value of these gifts by working ceaselessly for unity, human dignity and a peace based on justice. May God bless you all! Thank you.

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[VIAGGIO APOSTOLICO DEL SANTO PADRE FRANCESCO   
IN KENYA, UGANDA E NELLA REPUBBLICA CENTRAFRICANA](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBRE 2015)

**VISITA AL CAMPO PROFUGHI DI SAINT SAUVEUR**

***SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE***

*Bangui (Repubblica Centrafricana)  
Domenica, 29 novembre 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/29/banguicampoprofughi.html)**]**

Saluto tutti voi che siete qui.

Vi dico che ho letto quello che i bambini avevano scritto [su cartelli]: “pace”, “perdono”, “unità” e tante cose… “amore”. Noi dobbiamo lavorare e pregare e fare di tutto per la pace. Ma la pace senza amore, senza amicizia, senza tolleranza, senza perdono, non è possibile. Ognuno di noi deve fare qualcosa. Io vi auguro, a voi e a tutti i centrafricani, la pace, una grande pace fra voi. Che voi possiate vivere in pace qualunque sia l’etnia, la cultura, la religione, lo stato sociale. Ma tutti in pace! Tutti! Perché tutti siamo fratelli. Mi piacerebbe che tutti dicessimo insieme: “Tutti siamo fratelli”. [La gente ripete: “Tutti siamo fratelli”] Un’altra volta! [“Tutti siamo fratelli”]. E per questo, perché tutti siamo fratelli, vogliamo la pace.

E vi darò la benedizione del Signore. Il Signore vi benedica: nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo. E pregate per me! Pregate per me, avete sentito? [“Sì!”]

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH EVANGELICAL COMMUNITIES**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Faculty of Evangelical Theology [FATEB], Bangui , Central African Republic  
Sunday, 29 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/29/repcentrafricanaevangelici.html)**]**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am happy to be able to meet you in this Faculty of Evangelical Theology. I thank the Dean of the Faculty and the President of the Evangelical Alliance of Central Africa for their kind words of welcome With fraternal affection I greet each of you and, through you, all the members of your communities. All of us are here in the service of the risen Lord who assembles us today; and, by virtue of the common baptism we have received, we are sent to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to men and women of this beloved country of Central Africa.

For all too long, your people have experienced troubles and violence, resulting in great suffering. This makes the proclamation of the Gospel all the more necessary and urgent. For it is Christ’s own flesh which suffers in his dearest sons and daughters: the poorest of his people, the infirm, the elderly, the abandoned, children without parents or left to themselves without guidance and education. There are also those who have been scarred in soul or body by hatred and violence, those whom war has deprived of everything: work, home and loved ones.

God makes no distinctions between those who suffer. I have often called this the *ecumenism of blood*. All our communities suffer indiscriminately as a result of injustice and the blind hatred unleashed by the devil. Here I wish to express my closeness and solidarity to Pastor Nicholas, whose home was recently ransacked and set on fire, as was the meeting-place of his community. In these difficult circumstances, the Lord keeps asking us to demonstrate to everyone his tenderness, compassion and mercy. This shared suffering and shared mission are a providential opportunity for us to advance together on the path of unity; they are also an indispensable spiritual aid. How could the Father refuse the grace of unity, albeit still imperfect, to his children who suffer together and, in different situations, join in serving their brothers and sisters?

Dear brothers and sisters, the lack of unity among Christians is a scandal, above all because it is contrary to God’s will. It is also a scandal when we consider the hatred and violence which are tearing humanity apart, and the many forms of opposition which the Gospel of Christ encounters. I appreciate the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation existing between the Christians of your country, and I encourage you to continue on this path of common service in charity. It is a witness to Christ which builds up unity.

With increasing intensity and courage, may you add to perseverance and charity, a commitment to prayer and common reflection, as you seek to achieve greater mutual understanding, trust and friendship in view of that full communion for which we firmly hope.

I assure you of my prayerful support along the path of fraternal charity, reconciliation and mercy, a path which is long, yet full of joy and hope.

I ask the Lord Jesus to bless all of you! May he bless your communities, and our Church as well! I ask you to pray for me. Thank you very much.

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TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**OPENING OF THE HOLY DOOR AT THE CATHEDRAL OF BANGUI AND  
HOLY MASS WITH PRIESTS, MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS, CATECHISTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

*Cathedral of Bangui (Central African Republic)  
First Sunday of Advent, 29 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/29/repcentrafricanamessa.html)**]**

***WORDS OF THE HOLY FATHER BEFORE OPENING THE HOLY DOOR***

Today Bangui becomes the spiritual capital of the world. The Holy Year of Mercy starts early in this land of Africa. A land which has suffered for years from war and hatred, lack of understanding, lack of peace; in this land of sufferings there are many countries bearing the cross of war. Bangui now becomes the spiritual capital of prayer for the Father’s mercy. Let us all implore peace, mercy, reconciliation, forgiveness and love. For Bangui, for the entire Central African Republic, for the whole world, for those countries experiencing war, let us ask for peace! Now, all together, let us ask for love and peace. All together: *Doyé Siriri!*

And with this prayer we now inaugurate the Holy Year, here, today, in this spiritual capital of the world!

***HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER***

On this first Sunday of Advent, the liturgical season of joyful expectation of the Saviour and a symbol of Christian hope, God has brought me here among you, in this land, while the universal Church is preparing for the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which we inaugurated here today. I am especially pleased that my pastoral visit coincides with the opening of this Jubilee Year in your country. From this cathedral I reach out, in mind and heart, and with great affection, to all the priests, consecrated men and women, and pastoral workers of the nation, who are spiritually united with us at this moment. Through you, I would greet all the people of the Central African Republic: the sick, the elderly, those who have experienced life’s hurts. Some of them are perhaps despairing and listless, asking only for alms, the alms of bread, the alms of justice, the alms of attention and goodness. All of us are looking for God’s grace, for the alms of peace.

But like the Apostles Peter and John on their way to the Temple, who had neither gold nor silver to give to the paralytic in need, I have come to offer God’s strength and power; for these bring us healing, set us on our feet and enable us to embark on a new life, to “go across to the other side” (cf. *Lk* 8:22).

Jesus does not make us cross to the other side alone; instead, he asks us to make the crossing with him, as each of us responds to his or her own specific vocation. We need to realize that making this crossing can only be done with him, by freeing ourselves of divisive notions of family and blood in order to build a Church which is God’s family, open to everyone, concerned for those most in need. This presupposes closeness to our brothers and sisters; it implies a spirit of communion. It is not primarily a question of financial means; it is enough just to share in the life of God’s people, in accounting for the hope which is in us (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15), in testifying to the infinite mercy of God who, as the Responsorial Psalm of this Sunday’s liturgy makes clear, is “good [and] instructs sinners in the way” (*Ps* 24:8). Jesus teaches us that our heavenly Father “makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good” (*Mt* 5:45). Having experienced forgiveness ourselves, we must forgive others in turn. This is our fundamental vocation: “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (*Mt* 5:48).

One of the essential characteristics of this vocation to perfection is the love of our enemies, which protects us from the temptation to seek revenge and from the spiral of endless retaliation. Jesus placed special emphasis on this aspect of the Christian testimony (cf. *Mt* 5:46-47). Those who evangelize must therefore be first and foremost practitioners of forgiveness, specialists in reconciliation, experts in mercy. This is how we can help our brothers and sisters to “cross to the other side” – by showing them the secret of our strength, our hope, and our joy, all of which have their source in God, for they are grounded in the certainty that he is in the boat with us. As he did with the apostles at the multiplication of the loaves, so too the Lord entrusts his gifts to us, so that we can go out and distribute them everywhere, proclaiming his reassuring words: “Behold, the days are coming when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (*Jer* 33:14).

In the readings of this Sunday’s liturgy, we can see different aspects of this salvation proclaimed by God; they appear as signposts to guide us on our mission. First of all, the happiness promised by God is presented as justice. Advent is a time when we strive to open our hearts to receive the Saviour, who alone is just and the sole Judge able to give to each his or her due. Here as elsewhere, countless men and women thirst for respect, for justice, for equality, yet see no positive signs on the horizon. These are the ones to whom he comes to bring the gift of his justice (cf. *Jer* 33:15). He comes to enrich our personal and collective histories, our dashed hopes and our sterile yearnings. And he sends us to proclaim, especially to those oppressed by the powerful of this world or weighed down by the burden of their sins, that “Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it shall be called, ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (*Jer* 33:16). Yes, God is righteousness; God is justice. This, then, is why we Christians are called in the world to work for a peace founded on justice.

The salvation of God which we await is also flavoured with love. In preparing for the mystery of Christmas, we relive the pilgrimage which prepared God’s people to receive the Son, who came to reveal that God is not only righteousness, but also and above all love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:8). In every place, even and especially in those places where violence, hatred, injustice and persecution hold sway, Christians are called to give witness to this God who is love. In encouraging the priests, consecrated men and woman, and committed laity who, in this country live, at times heroically, the Christian virtues, I realize that the distance between this demanding ideal and our Christian witness is at times great. For this reason I echo the prayer of Saint Paul: “Brothers and sisters, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men and women” (*1 Th* 3:12). Thus what the pagans said of the early Christians will always remain before us like a beacon: “See how they love one another, how they truly love one another” (Tertullian, *Apology*, 39, 7).

Finally, the salvation proclaimed by God has an invincible power which will make it ultimately prevail. After announcing to his disciples the terrible signs that will precede his coming, Jesus concludes: “When these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (*Lk* 21:28). If Saint Paul can speak of a love which “grows and overflows”, it is because Christian witness reflects that irresistible power spoken of in the Gospel. It is amid unprecedented devastation that Jesus wishes to show his great power, his incomparable glory (cf. *Lk* 21:27) and the power of that love which stops at nothing, even before the falling of the heavens, the conflagration of the world or the tumult of the seas. God is stronger, more powerful, than all else. This conviction gives to the believer serenity, courage and the strength to persevere in good amid the greatest hardships. Even when the powers of Hell are unleashed, Christians must rise to the summons, their heads held high, and be ready to brave blows in this battle over which God will have the last word. And that word will be one of love and peace!

To all those who make unjust use of the weapons of this world, I make this appeal: lay down these instruments of death! Arm yourselves instead with righteousness, with love and mercy, the authentic guarantors of peace. As followers of Christ, dear priests, religious and lay pastoral workers, here in this country, with its suggestive name, situated in the heart of Africa and called to discover the Lord as the true centre of all that is good, your vocation is to incarnate the very heart of God in the midst of your fellow citizens. May the Lord deign to “strengthen your hearts in holiness, that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (*1 Th* 3:13). Reconciliation, forgiveness, love and peace! Amen.

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION   
AND BEGINNING OF THE VIGIL OF PRAYER WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Cathedral Square, Bangui (Central African Republic)  
Sunday, 29 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/29/repcentrafricanaveglia.html)**]**

*Dear Young Friends,*

I greet all of you with affection. Your friend who spoke in your name said that your symbol is the banana tree, because it is a symbol of life: banana trees keep growing, they spread, they bear fruit which always gives nourishment and strength. Banana trees are also resilient. I think that this tells us clearly the road before you at this difficult time of war, hatred and division: it is the road of resilience.

Your friend said that some of you want to leave home. Fleeing from life’s challenges is never a solution! It is necessary to be resilient, to have the courage to resist, to fight for what is right! Those who flee do not have the courage to give life. Banana trees give life, they spread and keep giving new life because they are resilient, they remain, they stay put. Some of you will say: “But Father, what can we do? How can we be resilient?” Let me tell you two or three things that may be helpful for you, in order to be resilient.

First of all, *prayer*. Prayer is powerful! Prayer conquers evil! Prayer makes you draw near to God who is all-powerful. Let me ask you a question: Do you pray? I can’t hear you! [*the young people respond:* *Yes!*]. Don’t forget this!

Second, *work for peace*. Peace is not a document which gets signed and then filed away. Peace is built day by day! And peace is crafted; it is the work of our hands; it is built up by the way we live our lives. But someone may say: “Tell me, Father, how can I build peace? How can I be a peacemaker?” First: never hate anyone. If someone wrongs you, seek to forgive. No hatred! Much forgiveness! Let us all say this together: “No hatred! Much forgiveness!” [*all repeat in Sango*]. And if hatred does not dwell in your heart, if you forgive, then you will be a winner. Because you will win the hardest battle in life; you will win in love. And from love comes peace.

Do you want to be winners or losers in life? What do you want? [*We want to be winners!*] But we only win if we take the road of love. The road of love. Can we love our enemies? Yes! Can we forgive those who do us wrong? Yes! So, through love and forgiveness, you will be winners. With love you will win in life and you will always give life. Love will never make you losers.

Now I wish you all the best. Think of the banana tree. Think of resilience in the face of problems. Fleeing, going away is not a solution. You must be courageous. Have you understood what it means to be courageous? Courageous in forgiving, courageous in loving, courageous in building peace. Is that right? [*Yes!*] Let’s say it together! “Courageous in love, in forgiveness, in building peace”.

Dear young people of Central Africa, I’m very happy that I met you. Today we opened this Door. It is a sign of the Door of God's Mercy. Trust in God! Because he is merciful; he is love; he is capable of giving you peace. That is why I told you at the beginning to pray: we need to pray in order to be resilient, to love and not to hate, to be peacemakers.

Thank you for coming. Now I’m going to go in and hear some of your confessions.

Are your hearts ready to be resilient? Yes or no? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to work for peace? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to forgive? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts open to reconciliation? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to love this beautiful country of yours? [*Yes!*] And now let me go back to the very first thing. Are your hearts ready to pray? [*Yes!*]

I ask you also to pray for me, so that I can be a good bishop, a good Pope. Will you promise to pray for me? [*Yes!*]

And now I will give my blessing to you and your families. A blessing and a prayer, that the Lord will give you his love and his peace.

Have a good evening and pray for me!

**Prepared address by the Holy Father:**

*Dear Young Friends,*

Good evening! It is a great joy for me to be here with you this evening, as we enter upon a new liturgical year with the beginning of Advent. Is this not, for each one of us, an occasion to begin anew, a chance to “go across to the other side?” (cf. *Lk* 8:22).

During this, our meeting I will be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with some of you. I encourage each of you to reflect on the grandeur of this sacrament, in which God comes to meet us personally. Whenever we ask, he comes to us and helps us to “go across to the other side”, to that side of our life where God forgives us and bathes us in his love which heals, soothes and raises up! The *Jubilee of Mercy*, which I just opened particularly for you, dear Central African and African friends, rightly reminds us that God is waiting for us, with arms wide open, as we see in the beautiful image of the Father who welcomes the prodigal son.

The forgiveness which we receive comforts us and enables us to make a new start, with trusting and serene hearts, better able to live in harmony with ourselves, with God and with others. The forgiveness which we receive enables us in turn to forgive others. There is always a need for this, especially in times of conflict and violence, as you know all too well. I renew my closeness to all those among you who are have experienced sorrow, separation and the wounds inflicted by hatred and war. In such situations, forgiving those who have done us harm is, humanly speaking, extremely difficult. But God offers us the strength and the courage to become those artisans of reconciliation and peace which your country greatly needs. The Christian, as a disciple of Christ, walks in the footsteps of his Master, who on the Cross asked his Father to forgive those who were crucifying him (cf. *Lk* 23:34). How far is this sentiment from those which too often reign in our hearts! Meditating on the attitude and the words of Jesus, “Father, forgive them”, can help to turn our gaze and convert our heart.

For many people, it is a scandal that God came to be one of us. It is a scandal that he died on a cross. Yes, it is scandalous: the scandal of the cross. The cross continues to scandalize. Yet it remains the one sure way: the way of the cross, the way of Jesus who came to share our life and to save us from sin (cf. [*Meeting with Young Argentineans*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-argentini-rio.html), 25 July 2013). Dear friends, this cross speaks to us of the closeness of God: he is with us, he is with each one of you, in your joys and in your trials.

Dear young people, the most precious good which we can have in this life is our relationship with God. Are you convinced of this? Are you aware of the inestimable value that you have in God’s eyes? Do you know that you are loved and accepted by him, unconditionally, as you are? (cf. [*Message for the World Youth Day 2015*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco_20150131_messaggio-giovani_2015.html), 2). Devoting time to prayer and the reading of Scripture, especially the Gospels, you will come to know him, and yourselves, ever better. Today too, Jesus’ counsels can illumine your feelings and your decisions. You are enthusiastic and generous, pursuing high ideals, searching for truth and beauty. I encourage you to maintain an alert and critical spirit in the face of every compromise which runs contrary to the Gospel message.

Thank you for your creative dynamism, which the Church greatly needs. Cultivate this! Be witnesses to the joy of meeting Jesus. May he transform you, strengthen your faith and help you to overcome every fear, so that you may embrace ever more fully God’s loving plan for you! God wills the happiness of every one of his children. Those who open themselves to his gaze are freed from sin, from sorrow, from inner emptiness and from isolation (cf. [*Evangelii Gaudium*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 1). Instead, they can see others as brothers or sisters, accepting their differences and recognizing that they are a gift for all of us.

It is in this way that peace is built, day by day. It calls for setting out on the path of service and humility, and being attentive to the needs of others. To embrace this mindset, we need to have a heart capable of bending low and sharing life with those most in need. That is where true charity is found. In this way solidarity grows, beginning with small gestures, and the seeds of division disappear. In this way dialogue among believers bears fruit, fraternity is lived day by day and it enlarges the heart by opening up a future. In this way, you will be able to do so much good for your country. I encourage you do so.

Dear young friends, the Lord is alive and he is walking at your side. When difficulties seem to abound, when pain and sadness seem to prevail all around you, he does not abandon you. He has left us the memorial of his love: the Eucharist and the sacraments, to aid our progress along the way and furnish the strength we need to daily move forward. This must be the source of your hope and your courage as you “go across to the other side” (cf. *Lk* 8:22), with Jesus, opening new paths for yourselves and your generation, for your families, for your country. I pray that you will be filled with this hope. May you be ever anchored in it, so that you can give it to others, to this world of ours so wounded by war and conflicts, by evil and sin. Never forget: the Lord is with you. He trusts you. He wants you to be missionary disciples, sustained in times of difficulty and trial by the prayers of the Virgin Mary and those of the entire Church. Dear young people of Central Africa, go forth! I am sending you out!

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**MEETING WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Central Mosque of Koudoukou, Bangui (Central African Republic)  
Monday, 30 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/30/repcentrafricanamusulmani.html)**]**

*Dear Muslim friends, leaders and followers of Islam,*

It is a great joy for me to be with you and I thank you for your warm welcome. In a particular way I thank Imam Tidiani Moussa Naibi for his kind words of greeting. My Pastoral Visit to the Central African Republic would not be complete if it did not include this encounter with the Muslim community.

Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters. We must therefore consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as such. We are well aware that the recent events and acts of violence which have shaken your country were not grounded in properly religious motives. Those who claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace. Christians, Muslims and members of the traditional religions have lived together in peace for many years. They ought, therefore, to remain united in working for an end to every act which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God and whose ultimate aim is to defend particular interests by any and all means, to the detriment of the common good. Together, we must say no to hatred, no to revenge and no to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself. God is peace, God *salam*.

In these dramatic times, Christian and Muslim leaders have sought to rise to the challenges of the moment. They have played an important role in re-establishing harmony and fraternity among all. I would like express my gratitude and appreciation for this. We can also call to mind the many acts of solidarity which Christians and Muslims have shown with regard to their fellow citizens of other religious confessions, by welcoming them and defending them during this latest crisis in your country, as well as in other parts of the world.

We cannot fail to express hope that the forthcoming national consultations will provide the country with leaders capable of bringing Central Africans together, thus becoming symbols of national unity rather than merely representatives of one or another faction. I strongly urge you to make your country a welcoming home for all its children, regardless of their ethnic origin, political affiliation or religious confession. The Central African Republic, situated in the heart of Africa, with the cooperation of all her sons and daughters, will then prove a stimulus in this regard to the entire continent. It will prove a positive influence and help extinguish the smouldering tensions which prevent Africans from benefitting from that development which they deserve and to which they have a right.

Dear friends, dear brothers, I invite you to pray and work for reconciliation, fraternity and solidarity among all people, without forgetting those who have suffered the most as a result of recent events.

May God bless you and protect you! *Salam alaikum!*

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[APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS   
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

**HOLY MASS**

***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Barthélémy Boganda Stadium, Bangui (Central African Republic)*  
*Monday, 30 November 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2015/11/30/repcentrafricanastadio.html)**]**

We might be astonished, listening to this morning’s first reading, by the enthusiasm and missionary drive of Saint Paul. “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (*Rom* 10:15). These words inspire us to give thanks for the gift of the faith which we have received. They also inspire us to reflect with amazement on the great missionary effort which – not long ago – first brought the joy of the Gospel to this beloved land of Central Africa. It is good, especially in times of difficulty, trials and suffering, when the future is uncertain and we feel weary and apprehensive, to come together before the Lord. To come together, as we do today, to rejoice in his presence and in the new life and the salvation which he offers us. For he invites us to cross over to *another shore* (cf. *Lk* 8:22).

This *other shore* is, of course, eternal life, heaven, which awaits us. Looking towards the world to come has always been a source of strength for Christians, of the poor, of the least, on their earthly pilgrimage. Eternal life is not an illusion; it is not a flight from the world. It is a powerful reality which calls out to us and challenges us to persevere in faith and love.

But the more immediate *other shore*, which we are trying to reach, this salvation secured by the faith of which Saint Paul speaks, is a reality which even now is transforming our lives and the world around us. “Faith in the heart leads to justification” (*Rom* 10:10). Those who believe receive the very life of Christ, which enables them to love God and their brothers and sisters in a new way and to bring to birth a world renewed by love.

Let us thank the Lord for his presence and for the strength which he gives us in our daily lives, at those times when we experience physical and spiritual suffering, pain, and grief. Let us thank him for the acts of solidarity and generosity which he inspires in us, for the joy and love with which he fills our families and our communities, despite the suffering and violence we sometimes experience, and our fears for the future. Let us thank him for his gift of courage, which inspires us to forge bonds of friendship, to dialogue with those who are different than ourselves, to forgive those who have wronged us, and to work to build a more just and fraternal society in which no one is abandoned. In all these things, the Risen Christ takes us by the hand and guides us. I join you in thanking the Lord in his mercy for all the beautiful, generous and courageous things he has enabled you to accomplish in your families and communities during these eventful years in the life of your country.

Yet the fact is that we have not yet reached our destination. In a certain sense we are in midstream, needing the courage to decide, with renewed missionary zeal, to pass to the *other shore*. All the baptized need to continually break with the remnants of the old Adam, the man of sin, ever ready to rise up again at the prompting of the devil. How often this happens in our world and in these times of conflict, hate and war! How easy it is to be led into selfishness, distrust, violence, destructiveness, vengeance, indifference to and exploitation of those who are most vulnerable…

We know that our Christian communities, called to holiness, still have a long way to go. Certainly we need to beg the Lord’s forgiveness for our all too frequent reluctance and hesitation in bearing witness to the Gospel. May the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which has just begun in your country, be an occasion to do so. Dear Central Africans, may you look to the future and, strengthened by the distance you have already come, resolutely determine to begin a new chapter in the Christian history of your country, to set out towards new horizons, to put out into the deep. The Apostle Andrew, with his brother Peter, did not hesitate to leave everything at Christ’s call: “Immediately they left their nets and followed him” (*Mt* 4:20). Once again, we are amazed at the great enthusiasm of the Apostles. Christ drew them so closely to himself, that they felt able to do everything and to risk everything with him.

Each of us, in his or her heart, can ask the crucial question of where we stand with Jesus, asking what we have already accepted – or refused to accept – in responding to his call to follow him more closely. The cry of “those who bring good news” resounds all the more in our ears, precisely when times are difficult; that cry which “goes out through all the earth... to the ends of the earth” (*Rom* 10:18; cf. *Ps* 19:4). And it resounds here, today, in this land of Central Africa. It resounds in our hearts, our families, our parishes, wherever we live. It invites us to persevere in enthusiasm for mission, for that mission which needs new “bearers of good news”, ever more numerous, generous, joyful and holy. We are all called to be, each of us, these messengers whom our brothers and sisters of every ethnic group, religion and culture, await, often without knowing it. For how can our brothers and sisters believe in Christ – Saint Paul asks – if the Word is neither proclaimed nor heard?

We too, like the Apostles, need to be full of hope and enthusiasm for the future. The *other shore* is at hand, and Jesus is crossing the river with us. He is risen from the dead; henceforth the trials and sufferings which we experience are always opportunities opening up to a new future, provided we are willing to follow him. Christians of Central Africa, each of you is called to be, through perseverance in faith and missionary commitment, artisans of the human and spiritual renewal of your country. I underline, artisans of the human and spiritual renewal.

May the Virgin Mary, who by sharing in the Passion of her Son, now shares in his perfect joy, protect you and encourage you on this path of hope. Amen.

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NB: NO ENGLISH TEXT

[VIAGGIO APOSTOLICO DEL SANTO PADRE FRANCESCO   
IN KENYA, UGANDA E NELLA REPUBBLICA CENTRAFRICANA](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/travels/2015/outside/documents/papa-francesco-africa-2015.html)  
(25-30 NOVEMBRE 2015)

***CONFERENZA STAMPA DEL SANTO PADRE   
DURANTE IL VOLO DI RITORNO DALLA REPUBBLICA CENTRAFRICANA***

*Volo Papale  
Lunedì, 30 novembre 2015*

**[**[**Multimedia**](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/30/africagiornalisti.html)**]**

(Padre Lombardi)

Santo Padre, benvenuto tra noi per questo incontro che oramai è una tradizione e tutti ci aspettiamo. Siamo molto grati che dopo un viaggio così intenso voglia ancora trovare tempo per noi, e quindi comprendiamo benissimo quanto è disponibile per aiutarci.

Prima di cominciare con la serie delle domande, volevo però, anche a nome dei colleghi, ringraziare la EBU, la *European Broadcasting Union*, che ha organizzato le dirette dal Centrafrica. Le dirette televisive che sono girate per il mondo dal Centrafrica si sono potute realizzare grazie alla *European Broadcasting Union*, e qui abbiamo Elena Pinardi. La ringraziamo a nome di tutti. La EBU compie il 65° della sua attività, e si vede che serve ancora, e quindi noi le siamo molto grati.

Allora, adesso come al solito, abbiamo pensato di incominciare dai nostri ospiti del Paese nel quale ci siamo recati. Siccome abbiamo quattro kenyani, due domande vengono adesso, all’inizio, dal Kenya. La prima è di Namu Name, che è del *Kenya Daily Nation*.

(Bernard Namuname, *Kenya Daily Nation*)

La saluto, Santità. In Kenya Lei ha incontrato le famiglie povere a Kangemi. Ha ascoltato le loro storie di esclusione dai diritti umani fondamentali come la mancanza di accesso all’acqua potabile. Lo stesso giorno, Lei è andato allo stadio Kasarani dove ha incontrato i giovani. Anche loro Le hanno raccontato le loro storie di esclusione, a causa dell’avarizia degli uomini e della loro corruzione. Cosa ha provato mentre ascoltava le loro storie? E cosa bisogna fare per porre fine alle ingiustizie? Grazie.

(Papa Francesco)

Su questo problema, ho parlato almeno tre volte fortemente. [Nel primo incontro dei Movimenti popolari, in Vaticano](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141028_incontro-mondiale-movimenti-popolari.html); [nel secondo incontro dei Movimenti popolari, a Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in Bolivia](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150709_bolivia-movimenti-popolari.html); e poi due, altre due: nella [*Evangelii gaudium*](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), un po’, e poi chiaramente e fortemente nella [*Laudato si*’](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html). Io non ricordo le statistiche e per questo vi chiedo di non pubblicare le statistiche che dirò, perché non so se sono vere, ma ho sentito… credo che l’80% della ricchezza del mondo è nelle mani del 17% della popolazione; non so se è vero, ma se non è vero è azzeccato, perché le cose stanno così. Se qualcuno di voi conosce questa statistica, lo prego di dirla per essere corretto. E’ un sistema economico dove al centro c’è il denaro, il dio denaro. Io ricordo una volta che ho trovato un grande ambasciatore, parlava francese, e mi ha detto questa frase – non era cattolico – e mi ha detto: “*Nous sommes tombés dans l’idolâtrie de l’argent*”. E se le cose continuano così, il mondo continuerà così. Lei mi domandava cosa ho sentito con le [testimonianze dei giovani](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/27/kenyagiovani.html) e [a Kangemi](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/27/kenyakangemi.html), dove ho parlato anche chiaramente di diritti. Ho sentito dolore. E penso a come la gente non se ne accorge… Un grande dolore. Ieri per esempio, sono andato all’ospedale pediatrico: l’unico di Bangui e del Paese! E in terapia intensiva non hanno gli strumenti per l’ossigeno. C’erano tanti bambini malnutriti, tanti. E la dottoressa mi ha detto: “Questi nella maggior parte moriranno, perché hanno la malaria, forte, e sono malnutriti”. Il Signore – ma non voglio fare un’omelia! –, il Signore rimproverava sempre al popolo, al popolo d’Israele – ma è parola che noi accettiamo e adoriamo, perché è Parola di Dio – l’idolatria. E l’idolatria è quando un uomo o una donna perde la “carta d’identità”, il suo essere figlio di Dio, e preferisce cercarsi un dio a propria misura. Questo è l’inizio. A partire da lì, se l’umanità non cambia, continueranno le miserie, le tragedie, le guerre, i bambini che muoiono di fame, l’ingiustizia… Cosa pensa questa percentuale che ha nelle mani l’80% della ricchezza del mondo? E questo non è comunismo, questa è verità. E la verità non è facile vederla. Io La ringrazio di aver fatto questa domanda, perché è la vita…

(Padre Lombardi)

E adesso, la seconda domanda è anche di un altro collega del Kenya, di Mumo Makau, che è della “Radio Capital” del Kenya. Anche lui fa la domanda in inglese e traduce Matteo.

(Mumo Makau, *Radio Capital* del Kenya)

Grazie tanto per questa opportunità, Santo Padre. Vorrei sapere quale è stato per Lei il momento più memorabile in questo viaggio in Africa. Tornerà presto in questo Continente? E quale è la sua prossima meta?

(Papa Francesco)

Incominciamo dalla fine: se le cose vanno bene, credo che il prossimo viaggio sarà in Messico. Ancora le date non sono precise. Secondo: tornerò in Africa? Mah, non so… Io sono anziano, i viaggi sono pesanti… E la prima domanda: qual è stato un momento [che mi ha colpito particolarmente]… Penso a quella folla, quella gioia, quella capacità di festeggiare, di far festa con lo stomaco vuoto. Per me l’Africa è stata una sorpresa. Io ho pensato: Dio ci sorprende, ma anche l’Africa ci sorprende! Tanti momenti... La folla, la folla. Si sentono visitati. Hanno un senso dell’accoglienza molto grande. Ho visto, nelle tre Nazioni, che avevano questo senso dell’accoglienza, perché erano felici di sentirsi visitati. Poi, ogni Paese ha la sua identità. Il Kenya è un po’ più moderno, sviluppato. L’Uganda ha l’identità dei martiri: il popolo ugandese, sia cattolico che anglicano, venera i martiri. Sono stato nei due santuari, quello anglicano, prima, poi quello cattolico; e la memoria dei martiri è la sua carta di identità. Il coraggio di dare la vita per un ideale. E la Repubblica Centrafricana: la voglia di pace, di riconciliazione, di perdono. Loro hanno vissuto fino a quattro anni fa, cattolici, protestanti, islamici, come fratelli. Ieri sono andato dagli Evangelici, che lavorano tanto bene, e poi sono venuti [a Messa, la sera](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/29/repcentrafricanamessa.html). Oggi sono andato [nella moschea](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/30/repcentrafricanamusulmani.html), ho pregato nella moschea; anche l’Imam è salito sulla “papamobile” per fare il giro nel piccolo stadio… E’ questo: i piccoli gesti, è questo che vogliono, perché c’è un gruppetto che, credo, è cristiano o si dice cristiano, che è molto violento, non ho capito bene questo…, ma non è l’Isis, è un’altra cosa. E vogliono la pace. Adesso, si faranno le elezioni, hanno scelto uno Stato di transizione, hanno scelto il sindaco [di Bangui], questa Signora, come presidente dello Stato di transizione, e lei farà le elezioni; ma cercano la pace, tra loro, la riconciliazione, niente odio.

(Padre Lombardi)

Adesso diamo la parola a Philip Pulella, che è un nostro collega della Reuters, che tutti conosciamo.

(Philip Pulella, Reuters)

Santità, oggi si parla molto di “*Vatileaks*”. Senza entrare nel merito del processo in corso, vorrei farLe questa domanda. Lei, in Uganda ha parlato a braccio, ha detto che la corruzione esiste dappertutto, e anche in Vaticano. Allora, la mia domanda è questa: qual è l’importanza della stampa libera e laica nello sradicamento di questa corruzione, dovunque si trovi?

(Papa Francesco)

La stampa libera, laica e anche confessionale, ma professionale – perché la professionalità della stampa può essere laica o confessionale, l’importante è che siano professionisti davvero, che le notizie non vengano manipolate – per me è importante, perché la denuncia delle ingiustizie, delle corruzioni, è un bel lavoro, perché dice: “Lì c’è corruzione”. E poi il responsabile deve fare qualcosa, fare un giudizio, fare un tribunale. Ma la stampa professionale deve dire tutto, senza cadere nei tre peccati più comuni: la disinformazione – dire la metà e non dire l’altra metà –; la calunnia – la stampa non professionale: quando non c’è professionalità, si sporca l’altro con verità o senza verità –; e la diffamazione, che è dire cose che tolgono la fama di una persona, cose che in questo momento non fanno male, niente, forse cose del passato… E questi sono i tre difetti che attentano alla professionalità della stampa. Ma abbiamo bisogno di professionalità. Il giusto: la cosa è così, così e così. E sulla corruzione, vedere bene i dati e dirli: sì, c’è corruzione qui, per questo, questo e questo… Poi, un giornalista che sia un vero professionista, se sbaglia, chiede scusa: Credevo, ma poi mi sono accorto di no. E così le cose vanno benissimo. E’ molto importante.

(Padre Lombardi)

Allora adesso diamo la parola a Philippine de Saint-Pierre, che è la responsabile della televisione cattolica francese: quindi, andiamo in Francia, a Parigi. Siamo molto vicini, tutti, alla Francia in questo periodo.

(Philippine De Saint-Pierre, responsabile della televisione cattolica francese *KTO*)

Santo Padre, buona sera. Lei ha reso omaggio alla piattaforma creata dall’Arcivescovo, dall’Imam e dal Pastore di Bangui, e oggi più che mai sappiamo che il fondamentalismo religioso minaccia il pianeta intero: l’abbiamo visto anche a Parigi. Allora, di fronte a questo pericolo Lei pensa che i dignitari religiosi debbano intervenire di più in campo politico?

(Papa Francesco)

Intervenire in campo politico: se vuol dire “fare politica”, no. Faccia il prete, il pastore, l’imam, il rabbino: questa è la sua vocazione. Ma si fa politica indirettamente predicando valori, valori veri, e uno dei valori più grandi è la fratellanza tra noi. Siamo tutti figli di Dio, abbiamo lo stesso Padre. E in questo senso, si deve fare una politica di unità, di riconciliazione… - e una parola che non mi piace, ma devo usarla - di tolleranza, ma non solo tolleranza, convivenza, amicizia! E’ così. Il fondamentalismo è una malattia che c’è in tutte le religioni. Noi cattolici ne abbiamo alcuni, non alcuni, tanti, che credono di avere la verità assoluta e vanno avanti sporcando gli altri con la calunnia, con la diffamazione, e fanno male, fanno male. E questo lo dico perché è la mia Chiesa, anche noi, tutti! E si deve combattere. Il fondamentalismo religioso non è religioso. Perché? Perché manca Dio. E’ idolatrico, come è idolatrico il denaro. Fare politica nel senso di convincere questa gente che ha questa tendenza, è una politica che dobbiamo fare noi leader religiosi. Ma il fondamentalismo che finisce sempre in una tragedia o in reati, è una cosa cattiva, ma ce n’è un po’ in tutte le religioni.

(Padre Lombardi)

Adesso diamo la parola a Cristiana Caricato che rappresenta Tv2000, la televisione cattolica italiana dei vescovi:

(Cristiana Caricato di Tv2000)

Santo Padre, mentre noi questa mattina eravamo a Bangui, a Roma si teneva una nuova udienza del processo a mons. Vallejo Balda, alla Chaouqui e ai due giornalisti. Le pongo la domanda che ci hanno fatto anche molte persone: perché queste due nomine? Come è stato possibile che nel processo di riforma che Lei ha avviato, due persone di questo tipo siano potute entrare in una Commissione, la COSEA? Crede di aver fatto un errore?

(Papa Francesco)

Io credo che sia stato fatto un errore. Mons. Vallejo Balda è entrato per la carica che aveva e che ha avuto fino adesso. Lui era segretario della Prefettura degli Affari Economici, e lui è entrato. E poi, come è entrata lei, non sono sicuro, ma credo di non sbagliare se dico – ma non sono sicuro – che è stato lui a presentarla come una donna che conosceva il mondo dei rapporti commerciali… Hanno lavorato, e quando è finito il lavoro i membri di quella commissione che si chiamava COSEA sono rimasti in alcuni posti, in Vaticano. Vallejo Balda, lo stesso. E la signora Chaouqui non è rimasta in Vaticano perché è entrata per la commissione e poi non è rimasta. Alcuni dicono che si è arrabbiata di questo, ma i giudici ci diranno la verità sulle intenzioni, come l’hanno fatto… Per me [ciò che è uscito] non è stata una sorpresa, non mi ha tolto il sonno, perché propriamente hanno fatto vedere il lavoro che si è incominciato con la Commissione di Cardinali – il “C9” – di cercare la corruzione e cose che non vanno. E qui voglio dire una cosa – non c’entra con Vallejo Balda e Chaouqui, ma in generale, e poi torno, se Lei vuole –: la parola “corruzione” – l’ha detto uno dei due kenyani – tredici giorni prima della morte di san Giovanni Paolo II, in quella *Via Crucis*, l’allora cardinale Ratzinger, che guidava la *Via Crucis*, ha parlato delle “sporcizie della Chiesa”: lui ha denunciato questo! Per primo! Poi muore il Papa nell’ottava di Pasqua – questo era il Venerdì Santo –, muore Papa Giovanni Paolo, e lui è diventato Papa. Ma nella [Messa “*pro eligendo Pontifice*”](http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_it.html) – lui era Decano – lui ha parlato della stessa cosa, e noi lo abbiamo eletto per questa sua libertà di dire le cose. E’ da quel tempo che c’è nell’aria del Vaticano che lì c’è corruzione, c’è corruzione. Su questo giudizio, io ho dato ai giudici le accuse concrete, perché quello che importa, per la difesa, è la formulazione delle accuse. Io non le ho lette, le accuse concrete, tecniche. Io avrei voluto che questo finisse prima dell’8 dicembre, per l’[Anno della Misericordia](http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/it.html), ma credo che non si potrà fare, perché vorrei che tutti gli avvocati che difendono abbiano il tempo per difendere, che ci sia la libertà di difesa, tutta. E’ così: come sono stati scelti, e tutta la storia. Ma la corruzione viene da lontano.

(Cristiana Caricato)

Ma Lei cosa ha intenzione di fare, come intende procedere perché questi episodi non si possano più verificare?

(Papa Francesco)

Mah… io ringrazio Dio che non ci sia Lucrezia Borgia! [ridono] Non so, continuare con i cardinali, con la commissione a pulire… Grazie.

(Padre Lombardi)

Grazie. Allora, adesso tocca a Néstor Pongutá. Néstor Pongutá è un colombiano, lavora per “La W Radio” e credo anche per “Caracol”, comunque è un caro amico…

(Nèstor Ponguta, “La W Radio” e “Caracol”)

Santità, prima di tutto grazie per tutto quello che ha detto in favore della pace nel mio Paese, in Colombia, e per tutto quello che ha fatto nel mondo. Però in questa occasione vorrei farLe una domanda particolare. E’ un argomento specifico che ha a che fare con un cambiamento politico in America Latina, compresa l’Argentina, il Suo Paese, nel quale c’è ora il signor Macri dopo 12 anni di “kirchnerismo”, sta cambiando un po’… Che cosa pensa di questi cambiamenti, di come stia prendendo una nuova direzione la politica latinoamericana, del Continente dal quale Lei stesso proviene?

(Papa Francesco)

Io ho sentito qualche opinione, ma davvero di questa geopolitica, in questo momento non so cosa dire, davvero. Davvero, non so. Perché, ci sono problemi in parecchi Paesi su questa linea, ma davvero non so perché o come è incominciato, non so perché. Davvero. Che ci sono parecchi Paesi latinoamericani in questa situazione un po’ di cambiamento, questo è vero, ma non so spiegarlo.

(Padre Lombardi)

Adesso diamo la parola a Jürgen Baez della *DPA*, che lavora in Sudafrica.

(Jürgen Baez della *DPA*, Sudafrica)

Santità, l’AIDS sta devastando l’Africa. La cura aiuta oggi molte persone a vivere più a lungo. Ma l’epidemia continua. Solo in Uganda, l’anno scorso ci sono stati 135 mila nuovi contagi da AIDS. In Kenya la situazione è addirittura peggiore. L’AIDS è la prima causa di morte tra i giovani africani. Santità, Lei ha incontrato bambini sieropositivi e ha ascoltato una testimonianza commovente in Uganda. Eppure, Lei ha detto molto poco su questo argomento. Noi sappiamo che la prevenzione è fondamentale. Sappiamo anche che il profilattico non è l’unico mezzo per fermare l’epidemia. Sappiamo che però è una parte importante della risposta. Non è forse tempo di cambiare la posizione della Chiesa a questo proposito? Di consentire l’uso del profilattico al fine di prevenire ulteriori contagi?

(Papa Francesco)

La domanda mi sembra troppo piccola e mi sembra anche una domanda parziale. Sì, è uno dei metodi; la morale della Chiesa si trova – penso – su questo punto davanti a una perplessità: è il quinto o è il sesto comandamento? Difendere la vita, o che il rapporto sessuale sia aperto alla vita? Ma questo non è il problema. Il problema è più grande. Questa domanda mi fa pensare a quella che hanno fatto a Gesù, una volta: “Dimmi, Maestro, è lecito guarire di sabato?”. E’ obbligatorio guarire! Questa domanda, se è lecito guarire… Ma la malnutrizione, lo sfruttamento delle persone, il lavoro schiavo, la mancanza di acqua potabile: questi sono i problemi. Non chiediamoci se si può usare tale cerotto o tale altro per una piccola ferita. La grande ferita è l’ingiustizia sociale, l’ingiustizia dell’ambiente, l’ingiustizia che ho detto dello sfruttamento, e la malnutrizione. Questo è. A me non piace scendere a riflessioni così casistiche, quando la gente muore per mancanza di acqua e per fame, per l’habitat… Quando tutti saranno guariti o quando non ci saranno queste malattie tragiche che provoca l’uomo, sia per ingiustizia sociale, sia per guadagnare più soldi - pensa al traffico delle armi! - quando non ci saranno questi problemi, credo che si potrà fare una domanda: “E’ lecito guarire di sabato?”. Perché si continuano a fabbricare armi e trafficare le armi? Le guerre sono la causa di mortalità più grande… Io direi di non pensare se è lecito o non è lecito guarire di sabato. Io dirò all’umanità: fate giustizia, e quando tutti saranno guariti, quando non ci sarà ingiustizia in questo mondo, possiamo parlare del sabato.

(Padre Lombardi)

Marco Ansaldo della “Repubblica”, eccolo qua, per il gruppo italiano, che Le fa la sua domanda.

(Marco Ansaldo)

Sì, Santità, voglio farLe una domanda di questo tipo, perché nei giornali dell’ultima settimana ci sono stati due grandi eventi su cui i media si sono concentrati. Uno è stato il Suo viaggio in Africa – e siamo tutti ovviamente felici che si sia concluso con un grande successo, sotto ogni punto di vista; l’altro è stato una crisi, a livello internazionale, che si è verificata tra Russia e Turchia, con la Turchia che ha tirato giù un aereo russo per uno sconfinamento dello spazio aereo turco per 17 secondi; con accuse, mancate scuse da una parte e dall’altra, innescando una crisi di cui francamente non si sentiva il bisogno, in questa “terza guerra mondiale a pezzi”, di cui Lei parla, nel nostro mondo. Ora la mia domanda è: qual è la posizione del Vaticano, in questo? Ma vorrei anche andare oltre e chiederLe se, per caso, Lei ha pensato di andare per i 101 anni degli eventi in Armenia, che ci saranno in aprile, il prossimo anno, così come aveva fatto lo scorso anno in Turchia…

(Papa Francesco)

L’anno scorso io ho promesso ai tre Patriarchi [Armeni] di andare: la promessa c’è. Non so se si potrà fare, questo, ma la promessa c’è. Poi, le guerre: le guerre vengono per ambizione, le guerre – parlo delle guerre non per difendersi giustamente da un aggressore ingiusto –, ma le guerre, le guerre sono un’“industria”! Nella storia abbiamo visto tante volte che un Paese, se il bilancio non va bene… “Mah, facciamo una guerra!”, e finisce lo “sbilancio”. La guerra è un affare: un affare di armi. I terroristi, fanno loro le armi? Sì, forse qualcuna piccolina. Chi dà loro le armi per fare la guerra? C’è lì tutta una rete di interessi, dove dietro ci sono i soldi, o il potere: il potere imperiale, o il potere congiunturale… Ma noi, da anni stiamo in guerra e ogni volta di più: i “pezzi” sono meno pezzi e diventano più grandi… E cosa penso io? Il Vaticano non so cosa pensa, ma cosa penso io? Che le guerre sono un peccato e sono contro l’umanità, distruggono l’umanità, sono la causa di sfruttamenti, di traffico di persone, tante cose… Si deve fermare. Alle Nazioni Unite, due volte ho detto questa parola, sia qui [in Kenya](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/26/kenyaunon.html) che [a New York](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/9/25/onuvisita.html): che il vostro lavoro non sia un nominalismo dichiarazionista, che sia effettivo: che si faccia la pace. Fanno tante cose: qui in Africa ho visto come lavorano i Caschi Blu… Ma questo non è sufficiente. Le guerre non sono di Dio. Dio è il Dio della pace. Dio ha fatto il mondo, ha fatto tutto bello, tutto bello e poi, secondo il racconto biblico, un fratello ammazza un altro: la prima guerra, la prima guerra mondiale, tra fratelli. Non so, così mi viene. E con molto dolore lo dico… Grazie.

(Padre Lombardi)

Adesso allora diamo la parola a Beaudonnet, che rappresenta *France Télévisions*: siamo di nuovo in Francia.

(François Beaudonnet, di *France Télévisions*)

Santo Padre, oggi a Parigi inizia la Conferenza sul cambiamento climatico. Lei ha già fatto un grande sforzo perché tutto vada bene. Però noi ci aspettiamo di più, da questo vertice mondiale. Siamo sicuri che la Cop21 sarà l’inizio della soluzione? Grazie tante.

(Papa Francesco)

Io non ne sono sicuro, ma posso dirLe che o adesso o mai! Dalla prima, che credo sia stata a Tokyo, ad adesso, si è fatta poca cosa, e ogni anno i problemi sono più gravi. Parlando in una riunione di universitari su quale mondo noi vogliamo lasciare ai nostri figli, uno ha detto: “Ma Lei è sicuro che ci saranno figli di questa generazione?”. Siamo al limite! Siamo al limite di un suicidio, per dire una parola forte. E io sono sicuro che quasi la totalità di quelli che sono a Parigi, al Cop21, hanno questa coscienza e vogliono fare qualcosa. L’altro giorno ho letto che in Groenlandia i ghiacciai hanno perso miliardi di tonnellate. Nel Pacifico c’è un Paese che sta comprando da un altro Paese terre per traslocare il Paese, perché entro 20 anni quel Paese non ci sarà più… No, io ho fiducia. Ho fiducia in questa gente, che farà qualcosa; perché, io direi, sono sicuro che hanno buona volontà di fare, e mi auguro che così sia. E prego per questo.

(Padre Lombardi)

Grazie per questa nota di ottimismo. E adesso, la parola a Delia Gallagher, di *CNN*:

(Delia Gallagher, *CNN*)

Grazie. Lei ha compiuto molti gesti di rispetto e di amicizia nei riguardi dei musulmani. Mi chiedo: cosa l’islam e gli insegnamenti del profeta Mohamed hanno da dire al mondo di oggi?

(Papa Francesco)

Non capisco bene la domanda… Si può dialogare, loro hanno valori. Tanti valori. Loro hanno tanti valori e questi valori sono costruttivi. E io ho anche l’esperienza di amicizia – è una parola forte, “amicizia” – con un islamico: è un dirigente mondiale… Possiamo parlare: lui ha i suoi valori, io i miei. Lui prega, io prego. Tanti valori… La preghiera, per esempio. Il digiuno. Valori religiosi, e anche altri valori. Non si può cancellare una religione perché ci sono alcuni gruppi – o molti gruppi – in un certo momento della storia, di fondamentalisti. E’ vero, le guerre fra religioni sempre ci sono state, nella storia, sempre. Anche noi dobbiamo chiedere perdono. Caterina de’ Medici non era una santa! E quella guerra dei Trent’anni, quella notte di San Bartolomeo… Dobbiamo chiedere perdono anche noi,  degli estremismi fondamentalisti per le guerre di religione. Ma loro hanno valori, con loro si può dialogare. [Oggi sono stato in moschea](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/it/2015/11/30/repcentrafricanamusulmani.html), ho pregato; anche l’Imam ha voluto venire con me a fare il giro al piccolo stadio dove c’erano tanti che non sono potuti entrare… E sulla papamobile c’erano il Papa e l’Imam. Si poteva parlare. Come dappertutto, c’è gente con valori, religiosa, e c’è gente che non è così… Ma quante guerre, non solo di religione, abbiamo fatto noi cristiani? Il sacco di Roma non l’hanno fatto i musulmani! Hanno valori, hanno valori.

(Padre Lombardi)

Grazie. Allora adesso invitiamo Marta Calderón, della *Catholic News Agency*:

(Marta Calderón, *Catholic News Agency*)

Santità, sappiamo che andrà in Messico. Ci piacerebbe sapere qualcosa di più di questo viaggio e anche se all’interno di questa linea di visitare Paesi che hanno problemi, pensa di visitare la Colombia o, in futuro, altri Paesi dell’America Latina, come il Perù…?

(Papa Francesco)

Sai, i viaggi, alla mia età, non fanno bene… Uno può farlo, ma lasciano il segno… Comunque, andrò in Messico. Anzitutto per visitare la Madonna, perché è la Madre dell’America. Per questo vado a Città del Messico. Se non fosse per la Vergine di Guadalupe, io non andrei a Città del Messico, per il criterio del viaggio: visitare tre città o quattro che non sono mai state visitate dai Papi. Ma ci andrò, in Messico, per la Madonna. Poi andrò nel Chiapas, nel Sud, alla frontiera con il Guatemala; poi andrò a Morella; e quasi sicuramente, sulla via del ritorno verso Roma, farò forse una giornata o un po’ di meno a Ciudad Juarez. Sulla visita ad altri Paesi latinoamericani: nel ‘17 sono stato invitato ad andare ad Aparecida, l’altra Patrona dell’America di lingua portoghese - perché ce ne sono due -, e di là si potrà visitare un altro Paese, fare la Messa ad Aparecida e poi… Ma non so, non ci sono piani… Grazie.

(Padre Lombardi)

Adesso torniamo in Kenya, con un altro dei nostri colleghi che sono venuti a viaggiare con noi dal Kenya: si chiama Mark Masai ed è del *National Media* del Kenya.

(Mark Masai, *National Media Group* del Kenya)

Prima di tutto, grazie per aver visitato il Kenya e l’Africa, e La aspettiamo ancora in Kenya, ma per riposarsi, non per lavorare. Ora, questa è stata la Sua prima visita e tutti erano preoccupati per la sicurezza. Cosa dice al mondo che pensa che l’Africa è soltanto lacerata dalle guerre e piena di distruzione?

(Papa Francesco)

L’Africa è vittima. L’Africa sempre è stata sfruttata da altre potenze. Dall’Africa venivano in America, venduti, gli schiavi. Ci sono potenze che cercano solo di prendere le grandi ricchezze dell’Africa. Non so, è il continente più ricco, forse… Ma non pensano ad aiutare a far crescere il Paese, che possa lavorare, che tutti abbiano lavoro… Lo sfruttamento! L’Africa è un martire. E’ martire dello sfruttamento della storia. Quelli che dicono che dall’Africa vengono tutte le calamità e tutte le guerre, non capiscono bene, forse, il danno che fanno all’umanità certe forme di sviluppo. E per questo io amo l’Africa, perché l’Africa è stata una vittima di altre potenze.

(Padre Lombardi)

Bene. Mi pare che siamo arrivati praticamente a un’ora, e quindi chiudiamo qui adesso le domande.

C’era un omaggio che volevano ancora farLe, in occasione – adesso – della Cop21: c’è un libro prodotto da *Paris Match* per i Capi di Stato. E’ un libro di fotografie fatto per i Capi di Stato sui problemi dell’ambiente.

(Caroline Pigozzi):

1.500 fotografi professionisti e non professionisti, scelti per questo libro di fotografie. Tutti i Capi di Stato lo ricevono oggi. Anche Lei, Santità.

(Padre Lombardi)

Allora, grazie, Santo Padre, per questo tempo che ci ha donato nonostante la fatica del viaggio. Le auguriamo un buon ritorno a Roma e una buona ripresa delle Sue normali attività.

(Papa Francesco)

Io ringrazio voi per il lavoro. Adesso viene il pranzo, ma dicono che voi oggi fate digiuno, dovete lavorare su questa intervista!… Grazie tante del vostro lavoro e delle vostre domande, del vostro interesse. Soltanto io vi dico che rispondo quello che so, e quello che non so non lo dico, perché non lo so. Non invento. Grazie tante. Grazie.

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