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EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD ON THE FAMILY

Pope leads prayer vigil ahead of Synod



(AsiaNews) - Listening, discussion and the gaze of Christ. These are the three gifts that Pope Francis has invoked for the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, which opens tomorrow morning with a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Square. Listening to "God and the people" with a "sincere, open and fraternal" discussion and a gaze "fixed on Jesus Christ," in order to learn from him.

Approximately 80 thousand people, a "family made up of families," had gathered in the square since early afternoon. Before the Pope's arrival, those gathered heard the witness of the life and journey of three couples; after the end of his speech, the lighting of seven torches representing an invocation of the Holy Spirit on the Synod works. These torches "signal" the opening of the meeting on the family in the homes of faithful of a worldwide.

The prayer vigil was sponsored by the Italian Conference of Bishops ahead of the synod which opens tomorrow on "The pastoral challenges for the family in the context of evangelization." The Synod Fathers were there together with the Pope, in St. Peter's Square. Francis began his address around 7 pm, an hour at which "one willingly returns home to the same meal, in the thick of affections, of the good that has been done and received, of the encounters which warm the heart and make it grow," but "it is also the most weighty hour for he who finds himself face to face with his own loneliness, in

the bitter twilight of broken dreams and plans." This evening "for all of these we make our prayer heard. A prayer for all."

The Pope got straight to the heart of the matter: "It is significant how - even in the individualistic culture which distorts and renders connections fleeting - in each person born of a woman, there remains alive an essential need of stability, of an open door, of someone with whom to weave and to share the story of life, a history to which to belong." In this context, the family "the family continues to be a school without parallel of humanity, an indispensable contribution to a just and united society." This horizon "helps us to grasp the importance of the Synodal Assembly which opens tomorrow." "Already, the 'convenire in unum' surrounding the Bishop of Rome is an event of grace, in which episcopal collegiality is made manifest in a path of spiritual and pastoral discernment." "To search for that which today the Lord asks of His Church, we must lend our ears to the beat of this time and perceive the 'scent' of the people today, so as know how to propose the good news of the family with credibility." In fact, "as in the Gospel, there is a strength and tenderness capable of defeating that which is created by unhappiness and violence."

To better address this challenge, the Pope invited those present to ask the Holy Spirit for three gifts: the gift of listening "to listen in the manner of God,

so that they may hear, with him, the cry of the people; to listen to the people, until they breathe the will to which God calls us;" "an openness toward a sincere discussion, open and fraternal, which leads us to carry with pastoral responsibility the questions that this change in epoch brings;" and finally "the gaze of Christ." Because, says Francis, "if we truly intend to walk among contemporary challenges, the decisive condition is to maintain a fixed gaze on Jesus Christ to pause in contemplation and in adoration of His Face." At that point, "our listening and our discussion on the family, loved with the gaze of Christ, will become a providential occasion with which to renew - according to the example of Saint Francis - the Church and society. With the joy of the Gospel we will rediscover the way of a reconciled and merciful Church, poor and friend of the poor; a Church 'given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without.' (Lumen Gentium, 8)." In conclusion a wish: "May the Wind of Pentecost blow upon the Synod's work, on the Church, and on all of humanity. Undo the knots which prevent people from encountering one another, heal the wounds that bleed, rekindle hope. Grant us this creative charity which consents to love as Jesus loved. And our message may reclaim the vivacity and enthusiasm of the first missionaries of the Gospel." ■

2012 INTERVIEW WITH CARDINAL TONG

Three words about the Church in China: Wonderful, difficult, possible

GIANNI VALENTE

CARDINAL John Tong Hon presents himself as a simple, smiling person. He prefers soft tones and a low profile. Among the new cardinals created by Pope Benedict XVI in the Consistory of 18 February 2012, his life story stands out for several reasons: a basketball player, an expert of Taoist and Confucian thought, a 'second generation' Christian. But now, the current bishop of Hong Kong will be for everyone above all the seventh Chinese cardinal in the history of the Church. Called on to offer with more intensity and authority his contribution of advice and balanced judgments with respect to the crucial issue of relations between the Holy See, the Church of China and the Chinese government.

Although this interview with *30 Giorni* was done two years back, we think that it still describes well the situation of the Church in China.

You are now a bishop and cardinal. But if one looks at your biography, it can be seen that your parents did not come from Christian families. None of your grandparents were baptized.

JOHN TONG HON: That is so. My mother was the first who had the opportunity to enter into contact with the Catholic faith. As a girl she attended a high school run by the Canossian Sisters, where there were also many Italian nuns. One day she also happened to meet the nuncio in China, who was visiting her school: the nuns had selected her to present a tribute of flowers to the representative of the Pope and she was very proud of this. She had also begun to study catechism, but without immediately receiving baptism, because there had never been a Catholic in



her family. She decided to be baptized only after the Second World War, when I was already born and was six years old.

They were terrible years, those of your childhood.

When the Japanese conquered Hong Kong, we fled to Macao. Then I was entrusted to my paternal grandmother, who lived in a village in Guangdong. Only at the end of the war could I reunite with my parents in Canton. They were the years of the civil war. Communists and nationalists were fighting internally in the north. While the refugees and wounded soldiers arrived in the southern provinces. The American missionaries who were in Canton welcomed and helped whoever was in need with all-embracing love, regardless of whatever side they belonged to. My mother and I also helped them to distribute aid to survivors and refugees. Looking at the witness of my pastor Bernard Meyer and his Maryknoll brother missionaries, I began to think that I too, when I grew up, could become a priest.

It happened that you studied in Rome precisely during the

years of Vatican Council II.

The Council helped me greatly to broaden and deepen my vision. I was ordained a priest, the Council had just closed a few weeks previously, by Pope Paul VI on 6 January 1966, with another 61 deacons of 23 mission countries, all students of Propaganda Fide.

Nearly half a century later, at the last Consistory, it was you who delivered a speech in front of the Sacred College to explain the situation of the Catholic Church in China. What did you say to your fellow cardinals?

To describe the situation in China, I used three words. The first is *wonderful*. It is a wonderful fact that in recent decades, the Church in China has grown and continues to grow, even if it is subjected to many pressures and restrictions. This is an objective fact, it can also be verified with numbers. Catholics in China in 1949 were only 3 million, now they are at least 12 million. In 1980, after the reopening ordered by Deng Xiaoping had begun, there were 1,300 priests. There are now about 3,500. And there are also about five thousand nuns,

two thirds of whom belong to the open church community registered with the government. And also 1,400 seminarians, one thousand of which are being trained in seminaries funded by the government. There are ten major seminaries recognized by the government and six similar centers related to the underground community. Since 1980, three thousand new priests have been ordained, and about 4,500 young nuns made their vows. Ninety percent of priests are aged between twenty-five and fifty.

So, all is well?

The second word with which I described the situation of the Church in China was the word *difficult*. And the most difficult

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test that the Church faces is the control imposed on ecclesiastic life by the government through the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (PA). I quoted a letter sent to me by a highly respected bishop of mainland China, who wrote: "In every socialist country, the government tries to come up with a method, using some nominal Christians to set up other organizations outside the Church structure itself, in order to control the same Church". The Chinese Patriotic Association is an example of this *modus operandi*. And in the Pope's letter to Chinese Catholics in June 2007 it is written that these organisms are not compatible with Catholic doctrine. It was seen again in the illegitimate episcopal ordinations imposed on the Church between 2010 and 2011.

But why does the Chinese superpower still feel the need to keep the life of the Church under such strict control?

According to analysis conducted by Leo Goodstadt – the well-known scholar in Hong Kong who was also an advisor to the last British governor, Chris Patten – there are several reasons. The communist regimes fear the competition of religion in influencing people's minds, their ideas, and eventually their actions. They realize more and more that religions are important in people's lives and are not going to disappear from the horizon of human societies, and that on the contrary the number of followers of religions is increasing and they are frightened by this. And after the event of 11 September, the anxiety has increased, since it was seen again that religious ideas can also lead people to go to war. Finally, the new leaders who are preparing to come into office in 2012 must at this time show themselves to be loyal communists.

As the Pope clearly wrote in his Letter to Chinese Catholics, "the Catholic Church which is in China does not have a mission to change the structure or administration of the State; rather, her mission is to proclaim Christ to men and women". How is it possible that the government of a powerful nation like China should be afraid of the political interference of the Vatican?

We live in society and our real life has to do necessarily with the political dimension and is related to it. But certainly the Church is not a political entity. It's not really our problem or

our goal to change the political systems. And moreover, in our case, it would be quite impossible to do so.

Let's return to your speech at the Consistory. What was your third word?

The third word I used to describe the condition of the Church in China is the word *possible*. To understand the rationale behind this choice, I read other passages in the letter from the bishop that I have already mentioned. That bishop said he was serene, peaceful and confident with regard to the present, also because he looked at the problems of today remembering the experiences he had lived through in the turmoil of the decades of persecution, between 1951 and 1979. He, in those past ordeals he had gone through, had been able to experience that everything is in the hands of God and God arranges things very well so that the difficulties may eventually contribute to the benefit of the Church. Thus we see that in itself it is not the increase of activities of control by the government that can quench the faith. Indeed it may happen that the effect is to increase the unity and awareness in the Church. Thus, the future may also appear bright. And we can quietly await with confidence the grace of God. Perhaps the solution of certain problems will not come about tomorrow. But neither will it be necessary to wait for a far off time.

Some say that in addressing the problems it is necessary to choose between two alternative ways: either the way of dialogue, or the way of the defense of principles. But do you think the two are really incompatible?

I for my part am inclined to be moderate. It is better to be patient and open to dialogue with everyone, even the communists. I am convinced that without dialogue no problem can really be solved. But while we should be open to dialogue with everyone, we should at the same time firmly maintain our principles, without sacrificing them. This means that, for example, a new bishop can accept episcopal ordination only if there is papal approval. We can not renounce these principles. It's part of our Creed, in which we confess the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. And then also the defense of the value of life, the inviolable human rights of the person, the indissolubility of marriage... We can not

renounce the truths of faith and morals as they are also outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Sometimes one gets the impression that some Catholic circles in Hong Kong have the task of 'measuring' the degree of catholicity of the Church of China. Is this the mission of the Church in Hong Kong?

Faith does not come from us. It always comes from Jesus. And we are not the controllers and the judges of the faith of our brothers. We are simply a sister diocese in relation to the dioceses that are on the mainland. So, if they want, we are happy to share with them our experience and our pastoral work. And if they are in more difficult situations, while we enjoy a greater freedom, our aim is only that of trying to support them. Praying that all can keep the faith, even under the pressures they are subjected to.

In certain comments, a large area of the Church in China is always described as if it were on the boundaries of fidelity to the Church. At the same time, the great devotion of Chinese Catholics is recognized. How do the two things go together?

It never seems appropriate to me to speak of China, which is so immense, in an all-encompassing as well as generic way. I am not convinced by the affirmations according to which the "faith is strong in China", nor by those that emphasize the opposite. Everything depends on the people. There are so many good witnesses of the faith, who offer their lives and also their sufferings to Jesus, and then there are also some people who, driven also by the environmental pressure, sacrifice their principles. These are just a few. For example, those priests who have agreed to receive episcopal ordination without the approval of the Pope. This is not correct, and we must say so.

It is precisely on the young bishops that the attention of many is focused. According to some they are allegedly fragile, and there are some opportunists among their ranks. What is to be done with them? Isolate them? Condemn them? Justify them always and whatever the case?

No, no, no isolation. First of all, let us pray for them. Also for those who have committed obvious errors. And if some people can approach them, and be their friend, they can urge them to recognize what was not correct in their choic-

es. And also to send a letter to the authorities to explain how things came about and possibly ask for forgiveness. This is simply a form of fraternal correction, of healing, not of punishment.

Do the divisions between the two groups of Catholics, the so-called 'official' and the so-called 'underground' have as the sole triggering factor the pressures and submissions imposed by the government?

Unfortunately not. There are also many other factors and reasons.

Even in China, the growing phenomenon of internet sites that attack Catholics about doctrinal and moral issues – starting with the bishops – accused of having betrayed the faith and the Church because of opportunism or cowardice, giving in to the illegal demands of the regime. What do you think of this?

I think that fraternal correction which I spoke of earlier is made through dialogue, not through internet attacks.

The difficulties experienced by the Church in China concern the bond of communion with the Bishop of Rome. Over time, do you see the danger that this bond will be perceived with less intensity among the clergy and the faithful?

In China I continue to register a great devotion to the Pope. They love the Holy Father, this is certain. They are under pressure on this point. They are hindered in their desire to have normal contact with the Successor of Peter. It is also for this reason that their desire becomes stronger. I would say that it is almost normal.

I want to ask you a question about an event of a long time ago. Is it true, Your Eminence, that you were present at the episcopal ordination of Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, that occurred twenty-seven years ago?

Yes, I was present at that mass. It was 1985. I was then a priest of the diocese of Hong Kong and since 1980 was directing the Holy Spirit Study Center [the influential research center on the life of the Church in China, ed.] Jin asked me to be present. He asked me to show my support, at that time. He told me that he had been in prison, that he wanted to keep his own faith and his communion with the universal Church and that he would send letters to Rome to confirm his submission to the Apostolic See and the primacy of the Pope. He said he had

weighed all in conscience, and that at that historical moment it seemed that there was no other way except to accept the episcopal ordination. Given the circumstances, it seemed to him an obligatory choice to sustain the diocese of Shanghai and save the church and the seminary there. Seven years ago the Holy See accepted his requests and recognized him as the legitimate bishop of Shanghai. But these are things of the past. Now we must look to the future...

Precisely looking at the present and future, what have you learned from the experiences of those times?

I learned that time can tell, can prove, time can give an account of things. Sometimes only in the long term can you see clearly whether something is right or wrong, whether a choice was dictated by good reasons or not. In the transitory immediacy of the moment you can not clearly judge how things are. But in the long run it emerges whether the intention of the heart was at least good. Sometimes situations are complicated in China. One is put under pressure, you do not find people to discuss things with. But if you make the choices having the love of Jesus and the Church in your heart, the right intention at the end can be verified by all, in the long run.

And what, with respect to the controversial events in which Chinese catholicity is involved, does this imply?

We can not fix on a single point, can not attempt to review every decision, and expect that every action and every decision made by members of the Church in China are always perfect in every moment and every situation. We are human, we are human beings! We all make mistakes and fall many times along the way. But then you can ask for forgiveness. But if each error is isolated and becomes a reason for condemnation without appeal, who can be saved? It is in the long run that you see whether a priest or bishop has a good intention in his heart. You see whether what they do is done for the love of God, the Church and the people, even with all their human errors. This is important: to discover that people persevere in fidelity because they are moved by the love of Jesus, also in difficult situations. In the end, in the long run, everyone will see it. And certainly God sees it, who searches the hearts of all of us. ■

“Oh, Lady, the dream of my soul, the inspiration of men and women! My labors are now ended. Many years have I traveled far and wide to seek you and to drink in the beauty of your eyes! Do not forsake me: be my protection.”

- Simon Vela's words at the apparition of Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus.

Filipinos celebrate the feast of Our Virgin Lady of Peñafrancia

- By Oswald Vas



Entrance procession of the Virgin Lady of Peñafrancia

On 21st of September, Sunday, many Filipino devotees gathered at St. Augustine's Church, Macau to celebrate the feast Our Virgin Lady of Peñafrancia. It's one of the biggest celebrated feasts in the Philippines. Filipinos have a great devotion to the Blessed Mother, and Our Lady of Peñafrancia is the Patroness of the Bicol Region in the Philippines.

The Eucharistic celebration began at 10.30 AM. The main celebrant of the mass was Rev. Fr. Jay Gapayao, SOLT, along with Rev. Fr. Artemio Balana Jr., SOLT as co-celebrant. "The gospel tells us to be generous, to give without expecting anything in return. We must always see the goodness given by

God to all of us and we must share these to others," explained Fr. Jay in his homily.

"I have a strong devotion to our Blessed Mother, 'Inay' (which means 'mother') the Virgin of Peñafrancia, because whenever I have problems I ask for her intercession to God," said one of the devotees. "My problems are always solved. I thank 'Inay' for all the blessings I receive through her intercession."

The feast of Our Lady of Peñafrancia is celebrated on the third Saturday of September in Naga City, Bicol, Philippines. According to locals, a Spanish government official from Peñafrancia, Spain, a native of San Martin de Castañeda, settled with his family in Cavite in 1712. One day, Miguel Robles de Covarrubias, a son of that Spanish official and a seminarian studying at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila became seriously ill. He and his family prayed to Our Lady of Peñafrancia whose picture he clutched to his breast as he hoped for recovery. Miguel vowed that if cured, he would construct a chapel on the banks of the Pasig River in Manila, in gratitude to Her. Miraculously cured, he was ordained a priest not in Manila but in the Ciudad de Nueva Caceres (now Naga City) where he built the chapel consecrating it to Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

The story goes that while the place where the image was found was Spanish territory, the one who found it was a French citizen. Simon Vela, the man singled out with this special favour by heaven, was the sole heir to a rich French family. With his heart burning in great

anxieties to dedicate himself to the service of God, he turned his back on the turmoil of the world and entered the convent. Simon became famous very soon among the members for his exceptional devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. One night he heard a voice saying "Simon, do not sleep; go to the Peña de Francia, on the part where the sun sets (a la parte del poniente) and there you will find an image of the Virgin which shall be afterwards an object of great devotion."

Simon lost no time and after putting on the clothes of a pilgrim, he began to search for the image. The words "Peña de Francia" and on the part "where the sun set" induced Simon to believe that the image was to be found on a place situated in the western part of France. So to this place he directed his steps. After 5 long and weary years of futile quest in these parts, he decided to write "Finish" to his

mission and give it up. One night however, he heard again the divine voice saying: "Simon, do not stop. A great reward awaits a great sacrifice and yours will be great." So Simon renewed again his trips. After visiting all the western part of France, torn and tired, without any success, he was again tempted to give up. But the voice was so inspiring and the message so sublime that he deemed it wise to obey rather than to ignore it. So he went on with his mission. When he reached San Martin de Castañar, Spain, a village at the foot of Peña de Francia, he immediately approached some people and fortunately, he was able to get information about the exact place of Peña de Francia, the very place where afterwards he found the object of his pilgrimage.

As the devotees still seek her, just as Simon Vela did, the love story between our Lady of Peñafrancia, whom they lovingly call "Inay," and them, her children, is never ending.



Catholic Pastoral Center Music Ministry

PASSING ON THE FAITH

Simply a gift

TERESA LO

IN VINITA HAMPTON Wright's book *"Praying Freedom"*, she wrote, "The next time someone gives you a gift, say thank-you and then enjoy that gift thoroughly. The next time a project or meeting goes well, say thank-you (To God, to other people involved, even to yourself). Ask God for what you want—what you really want. Then say something like this: 'That's what I want, but if there's something better that you know about but I don't, I'll take the better thing.'"

What Wright said resonated deeply with me. Beginning from 2010, Sr. Judith has granted me the privilege to open a class for teachers interested to know more about faith. Emily,

a new colleague back then, was the first one to answer the call. That was a sweet delight, or more a blessing; because of her, I felt that God was leading and that gave me more confidence to look for more prospective catechumens. In between these few years, the participants joined the class either voluntarily or through recommendations – which is just one of the many ways of God's calling. Usually the recommenders' names tend to be forgotten, but one thing crystal-clear about them is they have been a channel of peace spreading God's love to those who thirst.

This is the fourth year of the teachers' catechism class. The group grows bigger, with two small ones combined into one. The atmosphere is livelier, with

me this time more as a longtime friend and a spiritual companion.

I returned to school on Mid-Autumn Festival for a teachers' catechism class. The class was scheduled at eight thirty. In a city with ubiquitous crowds waiting to get on the bus, I chose to walk with a big handbag and a laptop in the rain. I dared not to be late for my first class, particularly when our meeting time only lasted for forty minutes.

Billy and Emily had arrived earlier, setting up the place. A while later, some others joined in. They brought along with them either the bible or the smartphones, knowing that we would relate the topic to the bible verses. I have always been impressed with their enthusiasm in learning more about God, but what touched me most that morning was the con-



Outdoor teachers' catechism gathering outside Taipa Houses Museum

versation after class, when Desmond first brought up the question: "How's your work?"

"The first week was wonderful," I replied cheerfully, "I had no planned schedules, but God just helped me put everything in place."

Winnie and Isabel were taking a huge relief, smiling so sweetly as though they had been waiting for this long-anticipated answer from a dear colleague, who has not disclosed anything personal after her departure.

The catechism class has miraculously evolved into a space for more deepening conversations, an element so needed for

establishing a solid relationship with God and others.

Gratitude must be repeated and – overdone. I had never thought of being a part in the teachers' catechism class, or having the privilege to lead the same group again in this new scholastic year. Yet God knows better what is good for me. He just shows up in the least expected!

I simply want to say thank-you and enjoy this gift thoroughly.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). ■

AN ON-GOING INVITATION FROM LOVE AND TO LOVE

Come to the banquet!

BEN JOHN BOSCO LEI

WE ARE LIVING in an international metropolis with people from different backgrounds, values systems and cultures. No matter where we come from, many of our cultures value banquets and feasts that mainly commemorate and/or celebrate the start or finish of some important things, as for example the anniversary of an event like our birthdays, victory of a game, championship of a competition, the birth of a new life, ordination of a deacon or priest even a bishop, graduation from a school or university, and or a wedding. It is always an honour and recognition for those who receive an invitation from the host of a banquet while the host always offers the best they can for those who are invited. Let us try to recall the feelings from one of your best banquet experiences. What do you feel? I bet it must be full of joy. Imagine if you hosted a banquet for your family and best friends, what would you do? What would you provide for your family and best friends? What experience do you want to them to have? We must try our best to prepare the best and to make our guests happy. God has the same desire.

God is hosting a wedding banquet and He had already prepared the best selected food and drinks. He "will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:19).

From the first reading and the Gospel on the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A), we read how God keeps inviting every one of us to be His guests in His banquet; just like the king in Jesus' parable, he invited several times for the guests. It is an open invitation to everyone and for everyone, just like the king he sent his servants to go "out into the streets and gathered all" they can find, both "bad and good". Why does He keep inviting us? Saint Thomas Aquinas has written in his work the following, "It was to impress the vastness of this love more firmly upon the hearts of the faithful." God loves us so much, and throughout the three readings from Isaiah, Saint Paul's letter and Gospel according to Matthew, it is possible to discover that the inspired writers have a desire and eagerness to share the joy and happiness of encountering and being with eternally permanent values of life.

The happiness, at the same time, comes from the blessing of being invited. In the Holy Mass, after Agnus Dei, the main celebrant invites the congregation

to pay attention to Jesus our True Host of the Heavenly banquet. A prayer is made from a verse of the Book of Revelation "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." Indeed, we are all blessed not only because we are all invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb of God but also are able and eligible to take part in the banquet, particularly the visible sacrament of the Holy Eucharist every day or on Sundays as His distinguished, honourable guests, in and through His Spouse, our Mother Church.

The one who invites us is not simply a significant figure like your superior, the president or prime minister of a country, or even our beloved Pope the Roman Pontiff, but the one who invites us is our Lord Almighty Eternal Everlasting God, our Father who art in Heaven, a host who is always loving and caring. This is an invitation from love and out of love. How lucky and blessed we are that we can be together in this banquet.

RESPONSE
TO THE BANQUET INVITATION

If you are going to a wedding banquet, how are you going to dress?

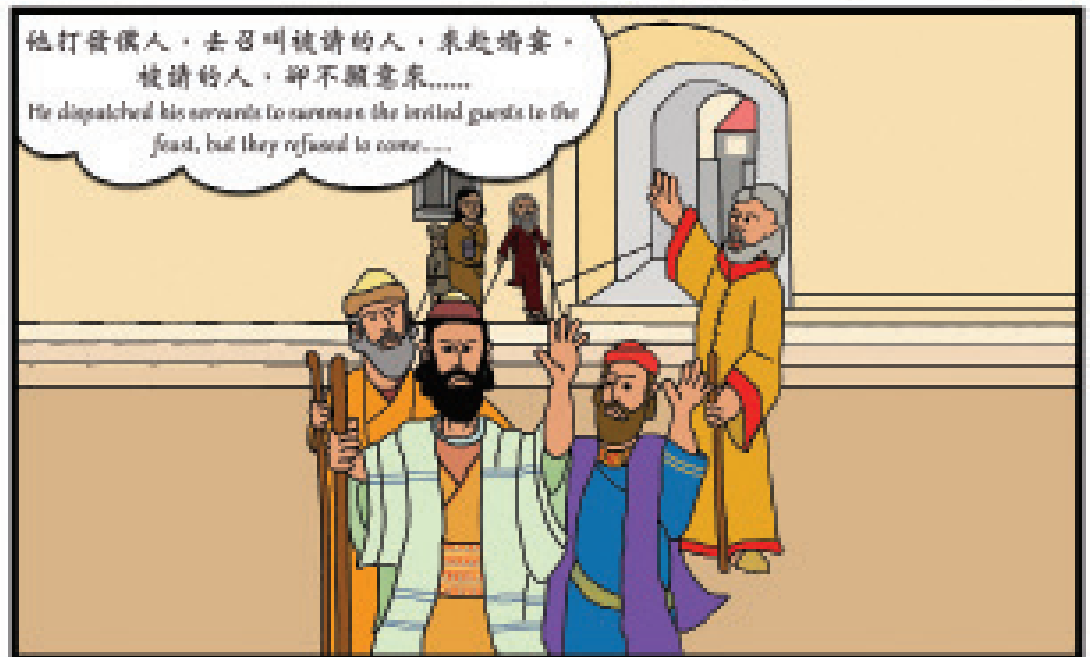
Look at our clothes carefully. The

threads on your clothes, no matter how they are intertwined with each other, are usually woven in two perpendicular directions. So, we can weave our own wedding garment even though we don't have any machine at home. How to weave a garment? First, prepare the thread. The thread should be the thread of love. Second, weave the thread in two directions. A few years ago, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had quoted Saint Gregory the Great's homily about the wedding garment. The wedding garment should be "woven symbolically" by the thread of love in two overlapped directions, "one above and one below: love of God and love of neighbour." Wearing a garment on one's body implies the attachment of the garment on the spirit, not superficially but closely related to our daily life practice. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI encouraged us "to enter His banquet with faith, but we must put on and take care of the wedding garment: charity, to live in the profound love of God and neighbour."

God's banquet starts with an invitation from love. It requires us to respond with love and in love. ■

主日福音
Sunday Gospel

常年期第二十八主日
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Santa Rosa da Lima English Secondary School celebrates their anniversary on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi

ON SATURDAY, October 4 2014 at 11 am, the Solemn Mass on the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi was celebrated in Santa Rosa de Lima English Secondary School's Holy Spirit Chapel. Combo-

nian Fr. Corrado Roberto presided the mass and Prof. Aurelio Porfiri conducted Santa Rosa de Lima English secondary choir, performing liturgical music during the liturgy.

Sr. Judith Yuen Mei Fun, FMM, supervisor of the school told O Clarim that they hope the liturgy, especially with the help of good liturgical music, can enhance the praying atmosphere. At the same time, she also wishes that this mass will raise the devotion to St. Francis of

Assisi, and invites people to follow his footstep: Keep a simple life, be humble, and be blessed with "the poor in spirit".

Liturgical music in the school, since 2009, is under the care of Professor Aurelio Porfiri, an Italian with more than 30 years of experience in this field. Under his care Santa Rosa de Lima English secondary choir has flourished at an unprecedented level, being now a model for the quality of the singing and the quality of the liturgical music performed

in the school's celebrations. During the mass the choir give the first performance of "Saint Augustine Mass", composed by Aurelio Porfiri for unison and organ. On the same occasion the choir has sung the motet "Alleluia, Franciscus Pauper" in honor of Saint Francis, for three voices a cappella, composed also by Aurelio Porfiri. In this piece it is described how Saint Francis, "poor and humble" enter in heaven amidst the singing of celestial hymns. ■



WHY EVERYONE DESERVES RESPECT

Where does dignity come from?

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WE KNOW that children should respect parents, students should respect teachers, subordinates should respect superiors. How about the other way around? Should parents respect children? Teachers respect students? Superiors respect subordinates? Why should we respect one another? What is the basis of dignity? Where does dignity come from?

Is it riches? If so, then poor people do not deserve respect.

Is it houses? Then homeless people do not deserve respect.

Is it education? Then those who could not go to school for some reason or are mentally handicapped do not deserve respect.

Is it age? Then little children, or babies in the womb, do not deserve respect.

Is it health? Then people with disabilities or sick people do not deserve respect.

Is it appearance? Then people we deem ugly do not deserve respect.

Is it eloquence? Then the dumb or those who stammer do not deserve respect.

Is it power? Then ordinary citizens, and subordinates in general, do not deserve respect.

Is it artistic ability? Then those who cannot sing or dance should not get respect.

Is it belief? Then those who do not believe or embrace other faiths do not deserve our respect.

Is it race? Then Hitler was right to kill the Jews.

Is it because man has feelings? But, as is obvious to us, animals also have feelings.

They also fear, they get tired, feel happy or angry. But we don't respect human beings the way we respect animals. You would not complain if I slaughtered a pig to make roast pork out of it, would you?

If dignity does not come from any of these, then where does it come from? Riches, or properties, or learning, or age, or health, or appearance, or power, or belief, or race all make for diversity and difference. Dignity must come from something that is common. And what do we have in common? Our human nature. Every one who is human deserves respect.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church provides an even stronger argument in favor of human dignity. She proposes an answer that comes straight from the Bible. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him," says the book of Genesis (1:27). Man and woman should be respected not only because they are human, but because they are images of God. An offense against man or woman is always an offense against God. This is why the Ten Commandments are so important: they guarantee that human beings are treated as persons and not as things. The Commandments do not suppress human dignity – they enhance and protect it. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches: "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith

and love that no other creature can give in his stead." (no. 357) Because of this, "all therefore enjoy an equal dignity" (CCC 1934) regardless of race or creed or sex or height or age or health. Every single person deserves respect.

Point 357 above is loaded, so let us dissect it to better understand.

The human individual is not something, but some-one. What do we do with things? We use them. We employ them for different ends. We "love" things because they are useful to us. We do not – should not – use persons. We do not "love" them because of their usefulness. We love them for themselves. You would feel offended if your daughter or son or friend told you, "I love you because you are useful to me." Yet we know this happens all the time. People are treated as things. They are used to procure pleasure, possessions, or power – "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). They are "loved" because they are useful. They are not treated as someone, but as something.

The human individual "is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons." We are made to God's image and likeness, and are thus capable of knowing (through the intellect) and capable of loving (through the will). We are capable of knowing not only the world around us, but also ourselves, and also the One who made us. "By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good."

(CCC 1704) "By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an 'outstanding manifestation of the divine image.'" (1705)

Note three concepts here: knowledge (intellect), love (will) and freedom. There is a fourth: responsibility. The most basic freedom that can never be taken from man is the power to make informed and intelligent choices. Freedom is not the possibility to choose just anything. I first have to find out what the choices are and inform myself about them. I do not choose blindly: freedom is not irrational. My reason (intellect) has to examine what these choices mean for me and present the one that helps me grow as a person. Only then do I choose. Once I have made the choice, I know that the choice is mine, and therefore I am responsible for it. I take upon myself the consequences of the choice. Intellect, will, freedom, responsibility: this is where dignity comes from. (More on this in another article.)

Thus we conclude: "Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order." (CCC 1738) ■

OCTOBER 12, 2014 - 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

We are all invited to the wedding banquet

Is 25:6-10a; Phil 4:12-14,19-20; Mt 22:1-14

What is celebrated at a wedding banquet? The answer is very simple: the promise of love between bride and bridegroom, which is a promise of life. The guests gather, rejoice and enjoy because something new is being born. Around the table full of foods, joy explodes. This is not a time for sadness and scarcity, but rather for gladness and abundance. It is the time to share the table and feel that, with the new love,

our hope is also being renewed.

Jesus couldn't have used a better image to speak about the reign of God. But this particular wedding is somewhat odd. Guests are usually happy and come to the banquet well dressed, bringing gifts along. They are going for a big feast. What is strange about this story is that the guests refuse to come. They have other cares that prevent them from coming to the banquet. Some even kill the king's messengers. And what is even

stranger is the king's solution. Since the guests refuse the invitation, he opens the doors to the banquet. The party will be open to all those who want to share the king's joy: those who sit in boredom along the way, those who do not expect any feast in their lives, even those who don't even know the king. They are all invited.

Sometimes we might wonder why some of us are in the church (in the banquet) while others aren't. Certainly there are some people who have been

invited and don't want to come. But there are also many at the crossroads, not knowing that there is a party prepared for them. They haven't heard that the promise of life and love is for them, too. We Christians are the servants of the king, in charge of announcing the banquet to all, of inviting them, helping them to prepare themselves to come to the banquet. If there are no messengers to give them the good news, how will they know that God has prepared a feast for them?

FOR REFLECTION

- Is our community a place of joy and gladness, of celebration of the promise of life and love that God has given us?
- Do we perhaps exclude some people from our community? Why?
- How do we go about inviting those who don't know they are supposed to come to the banquet? ■

Fr. Fernando Torres, CMF
CLARETIAN PUBLICATIONS

HISTORY OF SALVATION

Time of Israel (XII)

救恩史

以色列時代 (十)

Shema, Israel! (以色列! 你要聽)

「以下是梅瑟在約但河東岸，對全以色列所講的話。

..... 『以色列! 你要聽: 上主我們的天主，是唯一的上主。你當**全心、全靈、全力**，愛上主你的天主。我今天吩咐你的這些話，你應**牢記在心**，並將這些話**灌輸給你的子女**。不論你住在家裏，或在路上行走，或臥或立，常應**講論這些話**；又該**繫在你的手上**，當作標記；**懸在額上**，當作徽號；**刻在你住宅的門框上和門扇上**。』」(1:1; 6:4-9)

Shema, Israel! (Hear, O Israel!)

"These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness... **'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.'**" - 1:1; 6:4-9



申命紀的經文是「舍瑪」每天誦唸兩次的。

All Jews have to recite the Shema

經匣(希伯來文為tefillin)是一種「拉」(即舊約的梅瑟五書)經文。祢和手臂上，表達它們時時記得上主

The phylactery or tefillin is a small of the Torah (i.e., the Pentateuch - Testament) that the Jews bound to prayer time to serve as a reminder



◀ 額上的經匣
Head Phylactery



亞當與厄娃
Adam and Eve

公元前?
? BC

亞巴郎
Abraham

公元前1800
1800 BC

民長
JUDGES

王帝
KINGS

先知
PROPHETS

公元前?
? BC

諾厄
Noah

聖祖
PATRIARCHS

公元前1300
1300 BC

梅瑟
Moses

公元前1200
1200 BC

以色列十二支派
Twelve Tribes

公元前1000
1000 BC

達味
David

公元前920/930
920/930 BC

以色列(北國)建都撒瑪黎雅、猶大(南國)建都耶路撒冷
Israel (North) with Samaria as capital and Judah (South) with Jerusalem as capital

史
三)

愛主為法律之本 - 申命紀

THE BASIS OF THE WHOLE LAW:
LOVE FOR GOD - Deuteronomy

(Shema)，是猶太人

na two times each day.

很小的皮盒，裏面放有一小段「妥
禱的時候，猶太人將之繫於額頭
的法律。

leather box with some passages
the first five books of the Old
their forehead and arms during
to observe the law of the Lord.

手上的經匣
Hand Phylactery



▲ 額和手上的經匣
Phylacteries (Tefillin)



晨禱中的猶太人 ▲
Jews Praying in the Morning

耶路撒冷及聖殿被毀
Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
巴比倫侵略猶大（南國）
Babylon invades Kingdom of Juda

公元前586/587
586/587 BC

Temple rebuilt
重建聖殿

歸國
RETURN

羅馬人
Romans

公元前63
63 BC

放逐巴比倫
EXILE

公元前721/722
721/722 BC

亞述侵略以色列
（北國）
Assyrians invade
Kingdom of Israel

公元前538
538 BC

波斯滅巴比倫
Persians defeat
Babylonians

公元前300
300 BC

馬其頓人（希臘）
Macedonians (Greeks)