
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 392

significance of the Pope's visit to Africa

Recently Pope Francis made a five day visit to three countries in Africa: **Kenya, Uganda and Central African Republic**. Its great significance cannot be over emphasized.



Perhaps one might wonder why it seemed to be different from other visits, to other countries and in other continents? The answer is that it was in its timing, the condition of the countries he visited and the impact of his presence – not just on people locally but also on the entire people of Africa – that were of such great importance. These countries are not only among the poorest on the African continent, overlooked in the attention they attract from superpowers seeking political and economic gain, but they are also caught

up in their own internal traumas – the negative effects of civil war [Central African Republic], an extreme level of poverty [Uganda], terrorism [Kenya].

Pope Francis' visit was designed to, and did, provide people with a great opportunity to experience, once again, God's comforting presence through his own personal concern.

So one can validly describe it as a visit that has re-enforced hope and re-awakened a conviction of the persistent care and love of God towards the poor, the needy and all those in difficulty. He chose to give prominence to the less powerful at the very moment they needed it most. The spotlight and a sense of self-importance was taken away from the rich and the political ruling class – who always want to be celebrated and noticed in the news – and placed on the poor, who are more and more being marginalised.

Following his journey on television it was indeed edifying to see and hear poor people who are slum dwellers dancing, waving, shouting and shedding tears of joy. For them the Pope's visit demonstrated that they are also important before the whole world. In other words, the Pope has made visible the gospel message that God is always near to the poor, to those considered less important and to the abandoned.



Nor can the significance be overlooked of Pope Francis' visit to a mosque, in Central Africa, where there has been constant fighting between Christians and Muslims as a result of political disputes. Reading comments from the people of this country, both Christians and Muslims, one can only thank God for sending the Pope at this point in time. To quote a Muslim man, interviewed after the Pope's prayer with them, he said: *'Today, I know that the same religion, which can be a source of our division, can also be the source of our unity.'*



One cannot but be impressed by the Pope's practical personal example. His life of simplicity and humility, even while being the most important person in the world, is a very big challenge to our African political leaders, who do not know what it means to be simple and humble in the midst of power. Through the example of his life African leaders are being challenged to understand that true greatness comes from rendering a sincere and humble service to the poor and to the entire country. And this example likewise applies to African bishops, priests and religious. We must always remember that the virtue of our vocation requires us to be always God's real comforting, assuring and empowering presence to the poor, to the less privileged and the abandoned. We should learn from him how not to abandon ourselves to the comforts of our lives, drawn sometimes from our friendships with the rich, to the detriment of the poor.

Lastly Pope Francis, in his homily, called upon political leaders in particular and the people of Africa generally to shun corruption and all forms of social and economic injustices against the poor. These, according to him, are today's new forms of colonization! It happens to be the greatest social cancer that is threatening to destroy the fabric of the African continent.

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item 393

a new missionary venture in Vietnam

In sending two of its youngest members – **Fr Marcin Grzyb** [on left] and **Fr Adam Galazka** – to Vietnam the French Region of *Mercy of God* is undertaking a very courageous missionary venture. It could be likened to the story of the poor widow in the Gospel, they are giving all they have since the Region has only a very limited numbers.



In fact Marcin left for Vietnam already on 8 Oct 2015 and commenced local language studies on 20 Oct 2015. Adam, after three months of studying English in Washington – thanks to the generosity of the Immaculate Conception Province – will leave on 10 Feb 2016, together with Marcin and the Regional Rector, Fr Alexandre.

A base will be established in the Archdiocese of Saigon. Naturally linguistic, cultural and pastoral preparation is the first priority.

When asked what inspired these young confreres to go forth to the distant mission in this modern time, Fr Adam said that the letter of appeal from his Regional Rector asking for volunteers inspired him to say 'hear I am Lord!' Marcin was inspired by the life and example of French saint, Theresa of the Child Jesus, the co-patron of missions [together with Francis Xavier].

Just now our Society is experiencing a new Pentecost of missionary outreach, in line with its historic missionary spirit and tradition. As well as responding to the basic Christian commitment to proclaim the Good News of

Jesus in every corner of the world, these missionary initiatives help us to listen to the cry of God's people by offering the gift of our charism.

In all of these ventures three 'c's seem to be important – courage, creativity and confidence in divine providence – **courage** based on faith, **creativity** originating from openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, and **confidence** in the loving and caring providence of our Heavenly Father who alone guides our history and destiny.

The truth is that radical living of the Gospel always bring forth life.

If joy is missing from christian living, if endless sessions are required to deal with minor hurts and misunderstandings in our communities and groups of the Union, if we begin to enclose ourselves in a little world totally devoid of the universal and catholic spirit inherent in our charism, then perhaps we are losing sight of the three 'c's.

The positive aspect is that our Founder and his charism are such a treasure that they offer immense potential for interpretation and realisation.

Let us hope and pray that these two young confreres and every apostle of Jesus living and working in every possible way for God's Kingdom be a source of inspiration and life for the Pallottine family and for the church.

We wish a safe journey for St Vincent and his two sons to Vietnam. In fact Pallotti has a rather busy schedule in January and February this year since he has to accompany his sons to Malawi and Cuba as well.

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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #206 Fr. Julio della Valle was indeed a living saint. During one of the canonical visitations, I had the opportunity to talk with him. He had accepted his situation of life on the wheelchair as perfectly as possible, with utter trust in God. He was a very fine soul with profound humility and humanity and that made him a very good spiritual director, with great sensitivity and empathy. May he intercede for us with God.

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