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Editorial

An old Ghost came to haunt the Vatican when it hit the news headlines for all the wrong reasons early February, with a report published by the Geneva-based UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, accusing the Vatican of enabling sex offenders and protecting its reputation rather than victims. In a quick rebuttal, the Holy See said it is being treated unfairly in the child-sex abuse report by the panel, while reiterating it will continue to cooperate with the committee for the protection of minors. It is indeed distressing that the UN committee chose not to recognize how much has been done by the Holy See and the Church in recent years in recognizing errors, renewing laws and developing educational and preventative measures. We offer to you a few of those reactions.

February reminds us of the sudden and shocking announcement by Pope Benedict XVI, of his resignation last year, making way for a conclave and a new pope. One year on, we take a glimpse at the Pope Emeritus and his serene life of retirement.

As the upcoming Year of Consecrated Life is taking shape, Pope Francis tells us how every consecrated person is a gift for the People of God. "What would happen if there were no sisters? One can't imagine it!" he says. Perhaps it has never really crossed our mind! Pope Francis offered his choicest advice also to the thousands of engaged couples that filled the Vatican square on Valentine's Day! There is so much for every one of us that flows from the wisdom of our beloved Pope Francis.

Fr. Melwin Pinto, SJ

1. Evangelize with love, Pope urges missionary families

Pope Francis held an audience with missionary families from around the world Feb. 1, encouraging them to spread the gospel with great charity. “Evangelize with love, carry to all the love of God. Tell everyone you meet on the streets of your mission (and) that God loves man as he is, even with his limitations, his mistakes and his sins,” the Pope urged members of the Neocatechumenal Way. The meeting in the Paul VI audience hall included almost 8,000 members from the organization dedicated to helping people grow in their faith through parish-based communities, including families, seminarians and priests. Nearly 30 cardinals and bishops were also present. [\(Video\)](#)



Pope Francis thanked the participants for their “joy in faith” and “ardor of Christian testimony.” “My thoughts go in a special way to the families who will travel to different parts of the world to proclaim and give witness to the Gospel. The Church is grateful to you for your generosity! Thank you for all that you do in the Church and in the world!” he exclaimed.

The Neocatechumenal Way is sending hundreds of families on mission throughout the world, particularly to countries in Asia such as China, India, and Vietnam. People at various parts of the audience hall waved flags and erupted

in cheers as the names of their mission countries were announced. The Pontiff then offered some words of advice to those being sent to evangelize.

“Have the greatest care to build and conserve the internal communion of the particular Churches where you will go to work,” he emphasized.

“The (Neocatechumenal) Way has its own charism, its own dynamic, a gift that like all the gifts of the Spirit has a profound ecclesial dimension... (but) at times it could be better not to live in all the details of what your journey would require, in order to ensure the unity amongst brethren that forms one ecclesial community, which you always must feel a part of.”

Pope Francis also encouraged the evangelists to have special concern for those who are weakest. “The Neocatechumenal Way, as a journey of discovery of one’s Baptism is a difficult path, along which a brother or sister may find unexpected difficulties. In these cases, the exercise of patience and mercy on the part of the community is a sign of maturity in the faith.” Moreover, the Pope noted, a person’s freedom must always be respected. “The freedom of each individual must not be forced, and you should also respect the eventual choice of those who decide to seek outside the Way, other forms of Christian life to help him grow in response to the call of the Lord.”

Above all, said Pope Francis, those who evangelize should remember well that “the Spirit of God always arrives prior to us!” “Be messengers and witnesses to the infinite goodness and inexhaustible mercy of the Father,” he exhorted them.

Following his remarks, Pope Francis met with the groups going to China and India. He then blessed the crosses that the missionary families will take with them on their journeys. Christopher and Gina Crasto, along with their three children, were present at today's meeting with Pope Francis. The family from the west coast of India will go on a mission this year to the small town of Ranchi on India's east coast. "We came here to receive this mandate, to be sent on mission, but today we received much more than that: we received Jesus Christ in the presence of the Holy Father," Christopher Crasto told CNA. "We are blessed to be part of the mission, to be part of Holy Mother Church," he said.



Crasto has been part of the Neocatechumenal Way since he was a child, when his own parents joined. Through the organization, he said, "God has given us the possibility to live as a Christian family, to find Jesus Christ, to meet Jesus Christ in the Church. I never dreamed that we would meet Pope Francis," he continued, adding that the meeting with the Pope reconfirmed his own desire to live a missionary life. "Today I find myself ready and willing to go anywhere where the Church needs me, where I can find fulfillment in preaching the Word of God."

(Source: CNA/EWTN News)

2. Pope Francis describes how he learned to deprive himself



The Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano on **Wednesday Jan 29**, published a letter Francis sent to a fellow priest in 1990 in which he recounted all the things he learned during the sixth grade year he spent studying at a Salesian school in his native Buenos Aires.

The letter is remarkable in that the then-Rev. Jorge Mario Bergoglio remembered the names of all his priestly instructors from four decades previous. But more importantly, he remembered particular lessons, including the night in October 1949 in which he learned about death, the night he started saying his prayers before bed (and never stopped), and the depth of his adoration for the San Lorenzo soccer club.



But he also recounted having learned that year certain life lessons about piety, sexual purity and what he called the "Catholic culture" and the importance of looking out for the neediest. "I remember having learned there to deprive myself of certain things and give them to people poorer than me," Bergoglio wrote.

Francis has made reaching out to the poor and most marginalized the priority of his pontificate, saying the church must be like a “field hospital” for the wounded faithful, ready to welcome the neediest in with mercy. Francis wrote the letter in 1990 while living in Cordoba, during what has been described by biographers as an exile of sorts after his difficult tenure running the Jesuit order in Argentina during the country’s military dictatorship and subsequent term as the rector of a Jesuit seminary.

The letter was written to a Salesian priest in Argentina in praise of the Salesian education Bergoglio said he received at the Wilfred Baron of the Holy Angels School in Ramos Mejia, outside the capital, amid threats that the order might turn over some of its schools to lay administrators.



The letter was recently unearthed in the archives of the Salesian order in Buenos Aires, and published in full in Wednesday’s Vatican daily.

3. At 98, Blessed John XXIII's secretary to be oldest living cardinal

When the freshly named patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli, chose 37-year-old Father Loris Capovilla as his private secretary in 1953, a skeptical adviser told the cardinal that the priest looked too sickly to bear the strain of his new job.



"Then he'll die as my secretary," replied the future pope, now known as Blessed John XXIII.

Today, at age 98, now-Archbishop Capovilla has outlived his employer by half a century and remains an indefatigable custodian of his legacy, running a small museum dedicated to Blessed John's memory in the late pope's native town of Sotto il Monte Giovanni XXIII, about 25 miles northeast of Milan.

[\(Video\)](#)

On Feb. 22, Pope Francis is scheduled to make the archbishop the world's oldest living cardinal.

Most observers have interpreted the honor as an indirect tribute to Blessed John, whom Pope Francis will canonize April 27.

But the cardinal-designate himself told Catholic News Service, in a telephone conversation Jan. 28, that his elevation is a "sign of attention to all those thousands of priests around the world who have spent their lives in silence, in poverty, in obedience, happy to serve God and our humble people, who need, as Pope Francis continually says, tenderness, friendship, respect and love."

Cardinal-designate Capovilla, who was born in Pontelongo, Italy, on Oct. 14, 1915, and ordained to the priesthood in 1940, has hardly spent his own life in silence. A journalist before starting to work for Blessed John, he remains an energetic and eloquent raconteur, drawing on his remarkable memory for vividly detailed and revealing stories of his years with one of the most consequential figures in modern Catholic history.

He has also recounted those stories in numerous writings, including a memoir published in English as "The Heart and Mind of John XXIII." The cardinal-designate was privy to some of the pope's first remarks, only a few days after his election in 1958, about what would become the Second Vatican Council. Cardinals and bishops had presented the new pontiff with an array of challenges in areas that included the liturgy, diplomacy and the education and discipline of priests. "My desk is piling up with problems, questions, requests, hopes," Blessed John told his secretary. "What's really necessary is a council." When the secretary refused to comment, the pope interpreted his silence as disapproval.



"You think I am old," Blessed John told him. "You think I'll make a mess out of this enormous task, that I don't have time. ... But that's not how you think with faith. ... If one can only begin with the preparatory commission, that will be of great merit. If one dies, another will come. It is a great honor even to begin." Whatever doubts he may have had at the outset, Cardinal-designate Capovilla came to appreciate the council's historic importance and to play a part in it behind the scenes. By his own telling, it was the cardinal-designate who persuaded a reluctant and tired Blessed John to step to a window and address the crowd in St. Peter's Square on the night of Oct. 11, 1962, following Vatican II's opening day.



The former secretary recently quoted from that speech in a comment on his upcoming honor. "If you think that Pope John, on the greatest day of his life, the opening of the council, said in front of the whole world, 'my person is nothing, it is a brother who speaks to you, become a father by the will of our Lord' -- if a pope said this at the height of his pontifical service, what do you think a poor little priest can say?" the cardinal-designate told CNS.

He also quoted the late Cardinal Gustavo Testa, who, upon his elevation to the College of Cardinals in 1959, told Blessed John: "I don't want a coat of arms. I want a shield with these three words: 'Only your grace.' Which is to say, Holy Father, you have

thought of me, you have done it, and I have bowed my head."

(Source: Catholic News Service/ CNS)

4. Year of Consecrated Life set for 2015



The Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Cardinal João Braz De Aviz held a press conference on Friday to announce the upcoming Year of Consecrated Life. At the press conference, Cardinal Braz de Aviz told journalists that Pope Francis had announced the Year of Consecrated life in November at a meeting with the Union of Superiors General. [\(Video\)](#)

Noting that the Year will take place in the context of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Braz de Aviz said, “We believe that the Council has been a breath of the Spirit not only for the whole Church but, perhaps especially, for the



consecrated life. We are also convinced that in these 50 years consecrated life has undertaken a fruitful journey of renewal — not free, certainly, of difficulties and hardships — in the commitment to follow what the Council asked of the consecrated: fidelity to the Lord, to the Church, to their own charism and to the people of today. For this reason, he said, the first objective of the Year of Consecrated Life would be to “make a grateful remembrance of the recent past.”



With this positive outlook on the past, he continued, “we want to ‘embrace the future with hope’— the second objective. Although the crises that affect the world and the Church are also felt within consecrated life, Cardinal Braz de Aviz said women and men religious remain full of hope, based not on their own powers, but on trust in the Lord. “In Him,” he said, “no one can rob us of our hope.”

This hope, though, he said, cannot keep us from “living the present with passion” — and this is the third objective of the coming Year. This passion, the Cardinal said, speaks of “being in love, of true friendship, of profound communion.” This is “the true beauty of the life of so many women who profess the evangelical counsels and follow Christ ‘more closely’ in this state of life.” In this regard, he said, the Year of Consecrated Life will have an evangelical focus, helping people to realize “the beauty of following Christ” in the various types of religious vocations.

The Year of Consecrated Life is expected to begin in October of this year, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of *Lumen gentium* (the Second Vatican Council’s constitution on the Church), which has a specific chapter dealing with consecrated life. The anniversary of the Council’s decree *Perfectae caritatis*, will be the occasion of the close of the Year, in November 2015.



5. Consecrated life is a gift from God, Pope reflects

Pope Francis spoke emphatically about the importance of religious life during his Sunday Angelus message on Sunday, Feb 2, Feast of the Presentation of our Lord, at the solemn Eucharistic Celebration at the St. Peter's Basilica and later at the Mid-day Angelus. [\(Video\)](#)



“Every consecrated person is a gift for the People of God on a journey. There is much need of their presence, that strengthens and renews the commitment to spread the gospel, to Christian education, to charity for the most needy, to contemplative prayer; the commitment to a human and spiritual formation of young people, of families; the commitment to justice and peace in the human family,” he said on Feb. 2 to the crowds who braved the rain to gather in St. Peter's Square.

Noting that Feb. 2 is the World Day for Consecrated Life, the Pope continued, “consecrated persons are signs of God in diverse environments of life, they are leaven for the growth of a more just and fraternal society, prophecy of sharing with the little and the poor. As such understanding and experience, the consecrated life appears to us just as it really is: a gift of God!”

Departing from his prepared remarks, Pope Francis exclaimed, “What would happen if there were no sisters? Sisters in the hospitals, sisters in the missions, sisters in the schools... one can't imagine it! They are the leaven that carry the people of God forward!” “The Church and the world have need of this testimony of the love and mercy of God,” he stressed. Those who live a religious life in imitation of Christ's own poverty, chastity, and obedience, offer “a special witness to the gospel of the Kingdom of God.”

Although all Christians are consecrated to God in baptism and all are called to make “a generous gift of our lives, in the family, at work, in service to the Church, (and) in works of mercy,” those in religious life experience this consecration “in a particular way.” “Totally consecrated to God, they are totally given over to their brethren, to carry the light of Christ there where the darkness is thickest and to spread his hope to hearts who are discouraged,” emphasized the pontiff.



The Church will benefit from a greater knowledge and presence of consecrated men and women, urged Pope Francis. The year 2015 will be dedicated in a special way to religious life. “It is necessary to value with gratitude the experience of consecrated life and deepen the knowledge of different charisms and spiritualities. We must pray, so that many young people respond ‘yes’ to the Lord who calls them to consecrate themselves wholly to Him for disinterested service to their brethren.” He said.

6. Pope's Harley-Davidson motorbike & jacket sold for more than €300,000

A Harley-Davidson motorbike sold at auction on Thursday for almost 20 times its estimated value - because its previous owner was the pope. Signed "Francesco" on its tank, the Dyna Super Glide sold for €241,500 (\$328,300), with a Harley-Davidson leather jacket, also signed by the pope, going for €57,500, both to anonymous bidders, auction house Bonhams said. [\(Video\)](#)



"It has to be a world record for a 21st century Harley-Davidson and certainly for a Harley-Davidson leather jacket," said Ben Walker, head of motorcycles at Bonhams. The motorbike had a pre-sale estimate of €12,000-15,000. "In my whole career I've never had more interest in one

motorcycle than this one and it's gone viral. I've had inquiries from across the globe," he told the BBC before the auction.

The items were presented to the head of the Roman Catholic Church last June by the manufacturer to mark the U.S. brand's 110th anniversary. It was always a little difficult to see how he would get much use out of them – black leather is hardly papal style and revving engines don't chime well with quiet contemplation.

In line with his focus on the poor, and his preference for modest modes of transport - he used to take public transport as a cardinal in Buenos Aires – Pope Francis donated the motorbike to Catholic charity Caritas after signing it at a special ceremony at the Vatican in November. The proceeds will go towards the renovation of a hostel and soup kitchen based at Rome's Termini railway station and run by Caritas.



7. Legionaries elect new leader, apologize to Maciel's victims



The Legionaries of Christ have elected a new leader, and issued a statement apologizing to the victims of the late Father Marcial Maciel and acknowledging that the order was guilty of “excessive exaltation” of its founder. [\(Video\)](#)

Father Eduardo Robles Gil, *(pictured left)* a Mexican priest, was elected director general of the Legionaries by the general chapter of the order, meeting in Rome. His election was confirmed by Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, the secretary of the Vatican’s Congregation for Religious. In a statement released on February 6 along with the announcement of the order’s new leadership, the Legionaries addressed the difficulties that the order has experienced since the revelations that Father Maciel had led a double life. The statement says that “we hope to be able to redeem our painful history and overcome with good the consequences of evil.”

The Legionaries' statement acknowledges the damage that Fr. Marciel Maciel (*pictured left with*



Pope John Paul II) did, and expresses “our the arbitrary use of his authority and of material goods, the indiscriminate consumption of addictive medicines and the act of presenting writings published by third parties as his own.” The group says that the behavior of the founder, who maintained an appearance of piety while engaging in grossly immoral behavior, was “incomprehensible.”

The statement also acknowledges that other members of the Legion defended their leader for too long in the face of mounting evidence. As a group, the statement says, the order “gave undue, universal value of Father Maciel’s directives.” The new leadership apologizes to the founder’s victims, saying: “We are grieved that many victims and other affected persons have waited so long in vain for an apology and an act of reconciliation on the part of Father Maciel.”

However, despite the perfidy of the founder, the Legionaries insist that their order, which was modeled on Father Maciel’s orders and guidance, can recover from the damage. Rejecting suggestions that the Legionaries should be disbanded, the statement says that “a religious congregation and its essential features do not have their origin in the person of the founder; they are a gift of God that the Church accepts and approves and that afterwards live in the institute and in its members.”

Father Robles, the new director general, echoed that sentiment in his own personal statement. “We can’t erase the past,” he said. “We have to learn the lessons, mourn what occurred, trust in God’s mercy and, like St. Paul, run forward in pursuit of the goal of reaching Christ.” Father Robles has served various positions in the leadership of the Legionaries in Spain, Brazil, Chile, and his native Mexico. In 2011 he was appointed by Cardinal Velasio De Paolis, the Pope’s personal representative, to head a committee reaching out to the victims of Father Maciel.

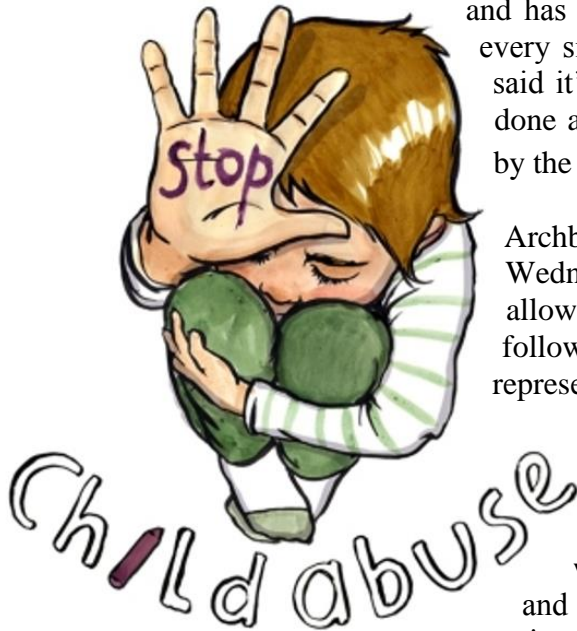


In announcing their new leadership, the Legionaries said that a thorough investigation had been done of the order’s past leadership, and the degree to which other priests had been complicit with Father Maciel. The statement said that these investigations have now been concluded.

(Source: CWN)

8. UN report shows "negative approach" to Vatican child protection

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See's representative to the UN in Geneva, has denounced "a negative approach" by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child to all that the Vatican "has been doing and has already achieved" in the area of child protection. Stressing that every single case of child abuse is "a case too much," the Archbishop said it's hard to find "other institutions or even other states" that have done as much for child protection as the "package of measures" taken by the Vatican and local bishops conferences. [\(Video\)](#)



Archbishop Tomasi was responding to a report, published on Wednesday Feb 5, criticizing the Vatican for policies which it says allowed priests to sexually abuse thousands of children worldwide. It follows on from a meeting between the UN Committee and Holy See representatives in Geneva on January 16th.

A statement issued by the Vatican press office also says the Holy See takes note of comments contained in the new report, but expresses regret over what it terms "an attempt to interfere with Catholic Church teaching on the dignity of human person and in the exercise of religious freedom." It stressed the Holy See remains committed to defending and promoting the rights of children, according to the principles set out in the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Archbishop Tomasi (*Pictured right*) said the Committee appears to have difficulty understanding the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding the protection of life in the womb and the freedom for believers to express their deeply held convictions. He noted the UN report asks the Church to accept the practice of abortion, something he described as "a contradiction with the principle of life" that the UN Convention itself should be upholding, that is the protection of children before and after birth.

The Archbishop added that, as a state party to the UN Convention, the Holy See intends to continue "carrying out all the elements" for the protection of children and explaining its position to the UN Committee.

In December American Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston announced that Pope Francis was establishing a new commission

on child protection and care for victims of abuse. He said it would work closely with church leaders worldwide to develop best practices, building on the norms that Bishops Conferences and other religious organizations have already been asked to draw up to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in dioceses across the globe.



The Director of the Press Office of the Holy See, Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, issued a Note to Vatican Radio in the wake of the UN Committee's Concluding Observations on the reviewed Reports of the Holy See (and five member states that are also parties to the convention).

He said, “It is impossible not to see that the final recommendations of the Committee appear to present – according to the judgment of those, who followed closely the process that preceded them – serious limits,” noting in particular the Observations’ conspicuous lack of understanding of the specific nature of the Holy See – a lack he describes as, “particularly grave.”



Fr. Lombardi SJ (*Pictured left*) stresses that, while the Holy See has been subjected to “unjustly harmful” media attention, it is also true and at least equally important to recognize that the Committee itself has received “serious and well-founded” criticism. He goes on to underline that, while the United Nations organization as such is not responsible for the shortcomings of the Committee, public opinion has assigned the organization the brunt of negative fallout from the Committee’s conduct.

He referred to the history of the Holy See’s adherence to and participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Holy See was one of the earliest adherents to the Convention). He writes “The adherence of the Holy See to the Convention, is motivated by a long-standing commitment of the Universal Church and of the Holy See in favor of the good of children.” He goes on to write, “It is for this reason, [that] the Holy See shall to dedicate itself to the effective implementation of the Convention, and to the maintenance of an open, constructive and sincere dialogue,” with the organs of the Convention.

Sister Mary Ann Walsh, (*Pictured below*) the Director of Media Relations for the USCCB, has described a recent report from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as a “lost opportunity.”

The UN report was highly critical of the Church’s handling of cases of abuse of children. “Sexual abuse of a minor is a sin and a crime and no organization can become complacent about addressing it,” said Sr Walsh. She emphasized, however, that “the Catholic Church has certainly done more than any other international organization to face the problem and it will continue to lead in doing so.”

The UN’s report, Walsh said, “is weakened by including objections to Catholic teaching on such issues as gay marriage, abortion and contraception.” These objections, she said, “seem to violate the U.N.’s obligation from its earliest days to defend religious freedom.”

Sister Walsh said UN’s Committee on the Rights of the Child “is correct to voice concern over sexual abuse,” and commended their efforts. “It would have credibility, however, if it also worked to protect the most basic right of a child: the right to live... Would that it made headlines because of concern for minors being trafficked in the world’s sex trade and children dying from starvation and dysentery from impure water. When the U.N. committee strays into the culture wars to promote abortion, contraceptives and gay marriage, it undermines its noble cause and trades concern for children to concern for organizations with other agendas. What a lost opportunity.”



9. Queen Elizabeth to meet with Pope Francis in April

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, will visit Rome on April 3, and will meet with both the Pope and the Italian president, the British Monarchy has announced.



In a Feb. 4 press release, the Monarchy said that the Queen – who is the head of the Church of England – is traveling to Rome at the invitation of Italian President Giorgio Napolitano. [\(Video\)](#)

After meeting with the politician in a private lunch at the presidential palace, “Her Majesty and His Royal Highness will have an Audience with His Holiness Pope Francis at the Vatican,” the statement said.

According to the BBC, the Queen had originally planned to visit Rome in 2013, but the visit was canceled due to

the monarch falling sick.

This will be the 87-year-old Queen's fifth meeting with a Pope at the Vatican, and her fourth as Queen: previously she had met Pope Pius XII in 1951, Bl. Pope John XXIII in 1961, and Bl. Pope John Paul II in 1980 and 2000.

In 1982, the Queen became the first British monarch to host and meet a reigning Pope in the United Kingdom, welcoming John Paul II to the royal residences at Buckingham Palace. She also greeted Benedict XVI with a full state welcome during his 2010 visit to the country.

10. Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI a year from his resignation

It was one year ago on February 11th, 2013, that the then-Pope, Benedict XVI, stunned the Church and the world with the announcement of his resignation, effective just over two weeks later, at the end of the month. [\(Video\)](#)

The resignation set in motion a series of events, the momentum of which is still very much with us. Since his resignation took effect, however, Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI has stayed largely out of the public eye: “withdrawn from the world,” as he himself described his circumstances.

Nevertheless, the man who served nearly eight years as bishop of Rome and then became the first Pope in nearly 600 years to resign the office, continues his life of prayer, correspondence, and even private visits with old friends, colleagues and acquaintances.



According to a report appearing in *The Voice of Romagna*, a small regional daily published in the Italian city of Rimini, some recent guests of Benedict were the archbishop of Ferrara-Comacchio, Luigi Negri, and Professor Marco Ferrini, who together lead the John Paul II International Fund for the Social Magisterium of the Church, with the professor describing the Pope-emeritus as, “lively,” though the weight of his 87 years is apparent.

Though he is out of the public spotlight, the Pope-emeritus has maintained an interest in affairs. “He spoke to us of the difficulty of the context in which the Church of today moves and acts, experiencing as it is an ever more virulent attack from the world,” said Ferrini, who went on to say that his host is not discouraged by the state of thing. He quoted the Holy Father as saying, **“If there is no struggle, then it is not Christianity.”**

Vatican Radio’s Alessandro Gisotti spoke to Archbishop Georg Gänswein, Personal Secretary of the Pope Emeritus and Prefect of the Pontifical Household, to find out how Benedict XVI spent the first anniversary of that historic resignation.

Please find the interview text in English translation below:

February the 11th of this year was a day like any other: the morning started with Mass, then the breviary, then breakfast, and then the day continued. Of course, on this day there was also talk of February the 11th 2013, which was a historic day, unforgettable for all those who lived through it. We thought about it, we talked about it, but it made no difference to February the 11th 2014.



A year has passed since this historic move of resignation. How would you describe this unique period for Pope Benedict?

The key to understanding this period lies in what Pope Benedict himself said in his resignation speech: that is the reason. There are no other reasons. Anyone who looks for other reasons is speculating: they have nothing to do with it. It’s that he no longer had the strength, and a Pope was needed who had the strength to be a good leader for the Church of Christ. This is an act of love, a brave act, but also an act of great humility, of love towards the Lord and towards his Church. And maybe few people understood this straight away, and I think in this past year understanding has increased of the fact that this was a brave, revolutionary, humble act which will certainly bear fruits in the future.

Benedict XVI lives a life “hidden from the world”, just as he said. But it’s not isolated, this life. What strikes you most about the way in which the Pope Emeritus spends his days?

What Father Lombardi [Director of Vatican Radio] said – that Pope Benedict lives hidden, discreet, but not isolated – was nice, because discretion and reserve are often confused with isolation, and this isn’t true at all. Pope Benedict lives, as we know, in the Mater Ecclesiae monastery, he has his daily rhythm: there are visits, there is correspondence, there is also lots of contact with the outside world... but he chose to live this way in order to pray for the Church and for his successor, and in this way he is at ease.

A year ago, many people feared this unprecedented, extraordinary coexistence of two Popes. But instead we see there is a naturalness in the relationship between these two servants of the Lord: they feel, as they have said, like brothers...



It's true. Many people, I think, had this idea, or this doubt: can a coexistence between the Pope Emeritus and the current Pope really work? Anyone who knows Pope Benedict cannot have doubted that he would not interfere in the governance of his successor. And that's how it has been. But it was nice that, immediately after his election, Pope Francis sought contact with his predecessor, and this initial contact was the start of a good, beautiful friendship which develops every day.

Many people would like to meet Pope Benedict again, would like to speak to him. We also know that many people write to Pope Benedict. What would you say to these faithful, and how does Pope Benedict receive this great love from so many?

This is a huge solace for Pope Benedict, which fills his heart with joy, but also with gratitude towards the people who care about him and towards the Lord. It's clear – and here I ask for understanding – that it's not possible for Pope Benedict to accept all requests to meet him, to see him, because there are too many. People write not only from Italy, but from the whole world. But for this sign of closeness, for this sign of love, of affection, Pope Benedict is very, very grateful.

11. Our Lady accompanies us in our journey: Pope to Sri Lankan Pilgrims

Our Lady is always close to us, she looks upon each one of us with maternal love and accompanies us always on our journey, said Pope Francis on Saturday, February 8, while addressing a group of Sri Lankan Catholics in the Vatican. He told them 'do not hesitate to turn to her for every need, especially when the burden of life with all its problems makes itself felt.' The group was led by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo. The group was on pilgrimage to Rome to render homage to Our Lady, at the end of the celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the consecration to her of the Church in Sri Lanka. [\(Video\)](#)



Recalling the consecration of Sri Lanka, the Pope said, 'seventy-five years ago, the dark clouds of what would be the second world conflict were thickening in the skies and the faithful, guided by a sure intuition of faith, entrusted themselves to Our Lady, who always defends her children from dangers. In 1940, in the dramatic circumstances of the war, the Archbishop of Colombo, Jean-Marie Masson, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, made a vow to build a shrine in honour of Our Lady if the island were preserved from foreign invasion. So



it came about, and after the end of the war the beautiful Shrine of Our Lady of Lanka at Tewatte was built, and was consecrated forty years ago.

Your homeland is called the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, continued Pope Francis, on account of its natural beauty and its shape. They say that the pearl is formed from the tears of the oyster. Unfortunately, many tears have been shed in recent years, on account of the internal conflict which caused so many victims and so much damage. It is not easy, I know, to heal the wounds and cooperate with yesterday’s enemy to build tomorrow together, but it is the only path that gives hope for the future, for development and for peace.

For this reason, said the Pope, I assure you that you have a particular place in my prayer. I ask the Lord to grant you the gift of peace and reconciliation, and to help you in your effort to ensure a better future for all who live in Sri Lanka. I entrust you to the maternal intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Lanka. I ask you to pray for me and from my heart I bless you, conclude Pope Francis.

12. Pope Francis offers three proposals for improving Catholic education

“Catholic education is one of the most important challenges for the Church, currently committed to new evangelisation in an historical and cultural context that is undergoing constant transformation”, remarked the Holy Father in his address to participants in the plenary session of the Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions), whom he received in audience in the Sala Clementina Thursday Feb 13 morning. [\(Video\)](#)



The agenda of the plenary session, the Pope commented, includes themes of primary importance such as the implementation of the Apostolic Constitution “Sapientia Christiana”, the consolidation of the identity of Catholic universities, and the preparations for the events which will fall in 2015: the fiftieth anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration “Gravissimum educationis” and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution “Ex Corde Ecclesiae”.

Pope Francis proposed three aspects for consideration by the participants: the value of dialogue in education, the qualified preparation of formators and the responsibility of educational institutions to express the living presence of the Gospel in the fields of education, science and culture.



Referring to the first of these points, he said, “Effectively, Catholic schools and universities are attended by many students who are not Christian or do not believe. Catholic educational institutions offer to all an approach to education that has as its aim the full development of the person, which responds to the right of every person to access to knowledge. However, they are also called upon to offer, with full respect for the freedom of each person and using the methods appropriate to the scholastic

environment, the Christian belief, that is, to present Jesus Christ as the meaning of life, the cosmos and history. Jesus began to proclaim the good news of the 'Galilee of the people', a crossroads of people, diverse in terms of race, culture and religion. This context resembles today's world, in certain respects. The profound changes that have led to the ever wider diffusion of multicultural societies require those who work in the school or university sector to be involved in educational itineraries involving comparison and dialogue, with a courageous and innovative fidelity that enables Catholic identity to encounter the various 'souls' of multicultural society”.

With regard to the second aspect, the Pope remarked that during his meeting with the Superior Generals, he had emphasised that education in our times “is guided by a changing generation, and that, therefore, every educator – and the Church as a whole is an educating mother – is required to change, in the sense of knowing how to communicate with the young”.

In relation to the responsibility of educational institutions to “express the living presence of the Gospel in the field of education, science and culture”, Pope Francis reiterated the need for Catholic academic institutions to avoid “isolating themselves in the world”, and instead to “know how to enter, with courage, into the Areopagus of contemporary cultures and to initiate dialogue, aware of the gift they are able to offer to all”

(Source: The Catholic World Report)



13. Pope Francis meets with engaged couples in St. Peter's Square

Ten thousand engaged couples from all over the world gathered today, on what is widely accepted as Valentine’s Day, in St. Peter's Square to consider the vocation of marriage, with the theme “The joy of 'Yes' forever”, and to meet with Pope Francis. The event, organised by the Pontifical Council for the Family, takes as its starting point the idea that **one does not get married once all problems are solved, but rather that one marries in order to face problems together**, and concludes that it



is still possible to take the risk of saying “forever”, that it takes courage, but “forever” is a prospect that brings joy and allows us to look to the future with hope. [\(Video\)](#)

*Getting Ready
For Marriage*



The event began at 11 a.m. with a series of testimonies from couples, interspersed with readings and songs dedicated to love in its various manifestations, and at 12.30 p.m. the Holy Father entered the Square to greet the couples and to comment on three issues put forward by many couples: The fear of “forever”, living together, the matrimonial way of life; and the type of matrimonial celebration.

“It is important to ask ourselves if it is possible to love one another 'forever'”, affirmed the Pope. “Today many people are afraid of making definitive decisions, that affect them for all their lives, because it seems impossible ... and this mentality leads many who are preparing for marriage to say, 'We will stay together



for as long as our love lasts'. **But what do we mean by 'love'? A mere emotion, a psycho-physical state?** Certainly, if it is just this, it cannot provide the foundation for building something solid. **But if instead love is a relationship, then it is a growing reality, and we can also say, by way of example, that it is built in the same way that we build a house. And we build a house together, not alone!** ... You would not wish to build it on the shifting sands of emotions, but on the rock of true love, the love that comes from God. The family is born of this project of love that wishes to grow, as one builds a house that becomes the locus of affection, help, hope and support. Just as God's love is stable and lasts forever, we want the love on which a family is based to be stable and

to last forever. We must not allow ourselves to be conquered by a 'throwaway culture'. This fear of 'forever' is cured by entrusting oneself day by day to the Lord Jesus in a life that becomes a daily spiritual path of common growth, step by step. Because 'forever' is not simply a question of duration! A marriage does not succeed just because it lasts; its quality is also important. To stay together and to know how to love each other for ever is the challenge Christian married couples face! ... **In the Our Father prayer we say, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. Married couples may also learn to pray, 'Give us this day our daily love',** teach us to love each other, to care for each other. The more you entrust yourselves to the Lord, the more your love will be 'for ever', able to renew itself and to overcome every difficulty”.

In response to the second question, Francis emphasised that **living together is “an art, a patient, beautiful and fascinating journey ...** which can be summarised in three words: please, thank you and sorry. **'Please' is a kind request to be able to enter into the life of someone else with respect** and care. ... True love does not impose itself with hardness and aggression. ... St. Francis said that 'courtesy is the sister of charity, it extinguishes hatred and kindles love'. And today, in our families, in our world, often violent and arrogant, there is a need for far more courtesy. **'Thank you': gratitude is an important sentiment.** Do we know how to say thank you? In your relationship, and in your future as married couples, it is important to keep alive your awareness that the other person is a gift from God, and we should always give thanks for gifts from God. ... It is not merely a kind word to use with strangers, in order to be polite. It is necessary to know how to say thank you, to journey ahead together”.

“Sorry'. In our lives we make many errors, many mistakes. We all do. ... And this is why **we need to be able to use this simple word, 'sorry'**. In general we are all ready to accuse other and to justify ourselves. It is an instinct that lies at the origins of many





disasters. Let us learn to recognise our mistakes and to apologise. ... Also in this way, the Christian family grows. We are all aware that the perfect family does not exist, nor does the perfect husband, nor the perfect wife. We exist, and we are sinners. Jesus, who knows us well, teaches us a secret: never let a day go by without asking forgiveness, or without restoring peace to your home. ... If we learn to apologise and to forgive each other, the marriage will last and will move on”.

Finally, the Holy Father commented that marriage should be a celebration, but a Christian rather than a worldly one. He offered as an example Jesus' first miracle at Cana, when he transformed water into wine when the latter appeared to have run out, thus saving the celebrations. “What happened at Cana two thousand years ago, happens in reality at every wedding feast. It is the presence of the Lord, who reveals Himself and the gift of His grace, that will render your marriage full and profoundly true. ... At the same time, it is good for your wedding to be sober and to emphasise that which is truly important. Some people are more concerned with external signs, with the banquet, the dress... These are important aspects of a feast, but only if they are able to indicate the true reason for your joy: the Lord's blessing upon your love. Ensure that, like the wine in Cana, the external signs of your wedding feast reveal the presence of the Lord and remind you, and all those present, of the origin of and reason for your joy”.

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