

MOROTO DIOCESE HOSTS THE 50TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY CELEBRATION AMIDST JUBILATION

By Jacinta W. Odongo, Media Officer, Uganda Episcopal Conference



BY JACINTA W. ODONGO

The Communicators of Tororo Ecclesiastical province carrying the 'Communication Drum' during the Mass for the National Celebration of the World Communication Day. (INSET) The Bishops pose for a group photo with the Communicators and the faithful.

CATHOLIC COMMUNICATORS from 18 Dioceses across the country joined the faithful at Regina Mundi Cathedral Parish in the Diocese of Moroto on Sunday April 24, to celebrate the 50th World Communications day at national level.

The Liturgical celebration, which was organized by Moroto Diocese in collaboration with the Social Communications Department of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), kicked-off at exactly 10.30am in grand style amidst songs, dances and cheers from the faithful. The Mass began with a procession of bishops and priests who head various diocesan social communications departments and Catholic media institutions in the country. The bishops in attendance included Rt. Rev Damiano Guglio Guzzetti, Bishop of Moroto, Rt. Rev Joseph Franzelli, Bishop of Lira and Chairman Social Communications Commission at UEC and Rt. Rev Giuseppe Filippi, Bishop of Kotido.

World Communications Day is celebrated by the Catholic Church annually on the Sunday

before Pentecost, which this year was held on May 8. However, the local Church can adjust the date according to its needs. The theme for this year as released by His Holiness Pope Francis on January 24 was, 'Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter.'

Bishop Guzzetti presided over the Mass that was concelebrated by Bishop Franzelli, Bishop Filippi and over 10 priests. In his homily, Bishop Guzzetti said that effective communication should promote the commandment of love and peace but not hatred, animosity among other vices.

"In today's communication 90 percent of the news reported is only negative and this is because of money," he said. "As communicators we should look beyond money and gain the courage to guide the people towards the processes of reconciliation to build lasting peace since we are all one just like Pope Francis said during his visit last year."

He further highlighted the Pope's

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On April 8, 2016, His Holiness Pope Francis presented to the world a special gift of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation

Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love). As the Holy Father himself points out, he prepared this Exhortation "to gather the contributions of the two recent Synods on the family, while adding other considerations as an aid to reflection, dialogue and pastoral practice, and as a help and encouragement to families in their daily commitments and challenges" (*Amoris Laetitia*, no.4).

The Holy Father also notes that *Amoris Laetitia* is especially timely as we celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy (**December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016**) in two respects;

"First, because it represents an invitation to Christian families to value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience.

Second, because it seeks to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy" (*Amoris Laetitia*, no.5).

Amoris Laetitia is indeed a must read document for each and every one of us since we are all connected to family life in one way or another. In the coming months, **New Contact** will be publishing articles on *Amoris Laetitia* and on the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

New Contact is circulated via email and can also be accessed on the website of UEC (www.uecon.org) and on Facebook. In case you need to contact us or give feedback, please call us on +256 782 746 812 or send an email to newcontact2013@gmail.com or podii2002@yahoo.com.

Let us keep in contact through **New Contact**.

Fr. Philip Odii

**Editor/Executive Secretary of Social Communications
Uganda Episcopal Conference**

New Contact is an electronic news bulletin of Uganda Episcopal Conference

Nsambya Hill, 672 Hanlon Road,
P.O. Box 2886 Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256-414-510570

Mobile Tel: +256-782746812

Fax: +256 414 510 545

E-mail: ucsnewcontact@gmail.com

Website: www.uecon.org

Moroto Diocese hosts the 50th World Communications day celebration

FROM PAGE 1



Rt. Rev. Giuseppe Filippi (left), Rt. Rev. Damiano Guzzetti (center) and Rt. Rev. Joseph Franzelli (right) at the Eucharistic Celebration.



The faithful that filled the Cathedral.

message which emphasized the need to communicate with everyone, without exception.

"What we say and how we say it, our every word and gesture, ought to express God's compassion, tenderness and forgiveness for all. Love, by its nature, is communication; it leads to openness and sharing. If our hearts and actions are inspired by charity, by divine love, then our communication will be touched by God's won power," read a section of the Pope's message.

Bishop Guzzetti urged the communicators to meditate on the gospel daily, to speak about the Mercy of God in their radio programs and to emulate Pope Francis' humble way of life, and gave them an example of the recent deed of the Holy Father when he visited the Greek Island of Lesbos and took 12 Syrian migrants back with him to the Vatican.

In his speech, Bishop Franzelli called on the Catholic communicators to read

WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE SAY IT, OUR EVERY WORD AND GESTURE, OUGHT TO EXPRESS GOD'S COMPASSION, TENDERNESS AND FORGIVENESS FOR ALL. LOVE, BY ITS NATURE, IS COMMUNICATION; IT LEADS TO OPENNESS AND SHARING.

critically, reflect and act on the message of the Holy Father by helping people in their dioceses to bring down the walls surrounding them.

"The Pope's message needs to be put into action by touching people's hearts to sustain them in their journey. Our communication should help people build bridges and bring down the walls of corruption, revenge, child sacrifice and hatred among other things," he said.

Meanwhile, the Executive Secretary of the UEC Social Communications Department, Fr Philip Odii, thanked Moroto diocese and the communicators for the wonderful organization of the celebrations and appealed to the Christians to continue supporting the communication work of the Church.

At the end of the Liturgical celebration, the communicators were awarded with certificates for their participation in the web-designing training workshop which earlier had been held at Tamarind Inn in Moroto from April 20-21. The communicators from Tororo Ecclesiastical province also handed over the 'Communications Drum' to the communicators of Lugazi Diocese, the hosts of the 2017 National Celebrations of World Communication Day. ■

PICTORIAL: 50TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY IN MOROTO



A Catechist carries the Cross during the procession.



A boy holding the Book of the Gospels, is carried on the shoulders of one of the faithful in the procession.



Priests in the procession.



A section of the children at the celebrations.



The Liturgical dancers inside the Cathedral.



Rt. Rev. Damiano Guzzetti preaches at the Mass.



Christians present their offertory.



A Choir leader conducts a song



Bishop Franzelli (Left) hands over a Certificate to Fr. Alfred Kotal of Moroto Diocese as Fr. Odii looks on.



The Bishops (center) pose for a group photo with the communicators.



Communicators engage in a group discussion during the workshop.



Bishop Franzelli (standing) addresses the communicators as Bishop Guzzetti (right) and Fr. Odii (left) listen and take notes respectively.



Mr. Businge facilitates the website design training workshop.



The communicators pose for a group photo after climbing Mt. Moroto for an excursion.

CATHOLIC COMMUNICATORS CHALLENGED TO **EMBARK ON THE USE OF ICT IN EVANGELIZATION IN THEIR DIOCESES**

By Jacinta W. Odongo



Bishop Franzelli addresses the Communicators. (INSET) Participants at the Web Designing Workshop.

THE Chairman of Social Communications Commission of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), Rt. Rev. Joseph Franzelli, Bishop of Lira Diocese, has appealed to Catholic Communicators in Uganda to acquire more knowledge and skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to help improve their work of evangelization in their dioceses.

He said that the use of ICT in evangelization will provide them with an effective way to reach to large numbers of people who face various challenges in life thus provide inspiration and encouragement.

Bishop Franzelli said this during the opening ceremony of a two-day Website Designing training workshop that was held in Moroto Diocese from April 20-21, for the Diocesan Communication Coordinators and journalists who work

with Catholic media institutions in Uganda.

"In today's world the use of ICT is relevant to many activities and programs of the Church, especially in evangelization," Bishop Franzelli said. "We should therefore make good use of this training by acquiring all the relevant skills in website designing so that we can improve our online presence for our dioceses and serve as vehicles for evangelization."

The two-day practical workshop, which was part of the Annual Social Communications week program, was organized by the Social Communications Department of UEC. It was designed to equip the communicators with the necessary skills and knowledge to leverage ICT for evangelization.

Mr Gerald Businge and Christopher Zziwa, both ICT experts, facilitated the

training.

Some of the topics discussed included, introduction to web designing and online publishing, creating a website using content management systems, writing for online and publishing articles on website, recording, editing and publishing audio to the web, capturing pictures, editing and publishing on the web as well as effective publishing and engagement on social media.

The Executive Secretary of Social Communications Department of UEC, Rev. Fr. Philip Odii, said that technologies are not only changing our way of communicating, but are a platform to living through a period of vast transformation.

"The activities in our dioceses in this age of globalization are huge thus we can perform an important service to our communities with the use of the websites, blogs and the internet," he said.

Meanwhile, some of the participants expressed their gratitude that the training programme has enhanced their skills on developing a website for effective reporting and urged the organizers to widen the scope of the program for more people to benefit in future.

The training attracted a total of 42 communicators from 18 dioceses across the nation. ■

BISHOP GUZZETTI CALLS ON COMMUNICATORS TO EXHIBIT A HIGH LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY

By Francis Junju, Radio Sapientia



Bishop Guzzetti addresses the communicators.

CATHOLIC COMMUNICATORS have been challenged to exhibit a high level of proficiency in this competitive age where secular media only reports about violence, vulnerability and war as the source of news and information.

"Ugandan media needs to be aware of the past mistakes that affected national development and work towards building peace and reconciliation in all its broadcasts," said Rt. Rev. Damiano Guzzetti, the Bishop of Moroto Diocese.

Bishop Guzzetti made these remarks during the opening ceremony of the Annual Social Communications Week that was held in the Diocese of Moroto from April 20-24.

He said that much of the news is full of negative journalism purposely selected

to generate income prompting the culture of hatred and anger amongst communities and countries.

He urged the communicators to reflect on the Pope's message released for the 50th World Communications Day, which ran under the theme 'Communication and Mercy, A Fruitful Encounter.'

"Social catechumen isn't there anymore. The society has become secular because all the means of communication have been overcome and the Pope is aware of that, thus he is prompting us in his message to be always a Church that goes Forth. We know how much this gospel can be applied to communication and the vehicle used is our voices," he explained. ■

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 50TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY

Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter

From the Vatican, 24 January 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
The Holy Year of Mercy invites all of us to reflect on the relationship between communication and mercy. The Church, in union with Christ, the living incarnation of the Father of Mercies, is called to practise mercy as the distinctive trait of all that she is and does. What we say and how we say it, our every word and gesture, ought to express God's compassion, tenderness and forgiveness for all. Love, by its nature, is communication; it leads to openness and sharing. If our hearts and actions are inspired by charity, by divine love, then our communication will be touched by God's own power.

As sons and daughters of God, we are called to communicate with everyone, without exception. In a particular way, the Church's words and actions are all meant to convey mercy, to touch people's hearts and to sustain them on their journey to that fullness of life which Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to bring to all. This means that we ourselves must be willing to accept the warmth of Mother Church and to share that warmth with others, so that Jesus may be known and loved. That warmth is what gives substance to the word of faith; by our preaching and witness, it ignites the "spark" which gives them life.

Communication has the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society. How beautiful it is when people select their words and actions with care, in the effort to avoid misunderstandings, to heal wounded memories and to build peace and harmony. Words can build bridges between individuals and within families, social groups and peoples. This is possible both in the material world and the digital world. Our words and actions should be such as to help us all escape the vicious circles of condemnation and vengeance which continue to ensnare individuals and nations, encouraging expressions of hatred. The words of Christians ought to be a constant encouragement to communion and, even in those cases where they must firmly condemn evil, they should never try to rupture relationships and communication.

For this reason, I would like to invite



Pope Francis speaks as he leads his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican April 27. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

all people of good will to rediscover the power of mercy to heal wounded relationships and to restore peace and harmony to families and communities. All of us know how many ways ancient wounds and lingering resentments can entrap individuals and stand in the way of communication and reconciliation. The same holds true for relationships between peoples. In every case, mercy is able to create a new kind of speech and dialogue. Shakespeare put it eloquently when he said: "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed: it blesseth him that gives and him that takes" (The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene I).

Our political and diplomatic language would do well to be inspired by mercy, which never loses hope. I ask those with institutional and political responsibility, and those charged with forming public opinion, to remain especially attentive to the way they speak of those who think or act differently or those who may have made mistakes. It is easy to yield to the temptation to exploit such situations to stoke the flames of mistrust, fear and hatred. Instead, courage is needed to guide people towards processes of reconciliation. It is precisely such positive and creative boldness which offers real solutions to ancient conflicts and the opportunity to build lasting peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt 5:7-9) How I wish that our own way of communicating, as well as our service as pastors of the Church, may never suggest a prideful and triumphant superiority over

an enemy, or demean those whom the world considers lost and easily discarded. Mercy can help mitigate life's troubles and offer warmth to those who have known only the coldness of judgment. May our way of communicating help to overcome the mindset that neatly separates sinners from the righteous. We can and we must judge situations of sin – such as violence, corruption and exploitation – but we may not judge individuals, since only God can see into the depths of their hearts. It is our task to admonish those who err and to denounce the evil and injustice of certain ways of acting, for the sake of setting victims free and raising up those who have fallen. The Gospel of John tells us that "the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32). The truth is ultimately Christ himself, whose gentle mercy is the yardstick for measuring the way we proclaim the truth and condemn injustice. Our primary task is to uphold the truth with love (cf. Eph 4:15). Only words spoken with love and accompanied by meekness and mercy can touch our sinful hearts. Harsh and moralistic words and actions risk further alienating those whom we wish to lead to conversion and freedom, reinforcing their sense of rejection and defensiveness.

Some feel that a vision of society rooted in mercy is hopelessly idealistic or excessively indulgent. But let us try and recall our first experience of relationships, within our families. Our parents loved us and valued us for who we are more than for our abilities and achievements. Parents naturally want the best for their children, but that love is never dependent on their meeting certain conditions. The

Messages of the Holy Father

family home is one place where we are always welcome (cf. Lk 15:11-32). I would like to encourage everyone to see society not as a forum where strangers compete and try to come out on top, but above all as a home or a family, where the door is always open and where everyone feels welcome.

For this to happen, we must first listen. Communicating means sharing, and sharing demands listening and acceptance. Listening is much more than simply hearing. Hearing is about receiving information, while listening is about communication, and calls for closeness. Listening allows us to get things right, and not simply to be passive onlookers, users or consumers. Listening also means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good.

Listening is never easy. Many times it is easier to play deaf. Listening means paying attention, wanting to understand, to value, to respect and to ponder what the other person says. It involves a sort of martyrdom or self-sacrifice, as we try to imitate Moses before the burning bush: we have to remove our sandals when standing on the "holy ground" of

our encounter with the one who speaks to me (cf. Ex 3:5). Knowing how to listen is an immense grace, it is a gift which we need to ask for and then make every effort to practice.

Emails, text messages, social networks and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal. Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between individuals and groups. The digital world is a public square, a meeting-place where we can either encourage or demean one another, engage in a meaningful discussion or unfair attacks. I pray that this Jubilee Year, lived in mercy, "may open us to even

I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO SEE SOCIETY NOT AS A FORUM WHERE STRANGERS COMPETE AND TRY TO COME OUT ON TOP, BUT ABOVE ALL AS A HOME OR A FAMILY, WHERE THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN AND WHERE EVERYONE FEELS WELCOME. FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, WE MUST FIRST LISTEN. COMMUNICATING MEANS SHARING, AND SHARING DEMANDS LISTENING AND ACCEPTANCE.

more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; and that it may eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination" (Misericordiae Vultus, 23). The internet can help us to be better citizens. Access to digital networks entails a responsibility for our neighbour whom we do not see but who is nonetheless real and has a dignity which must be respected. The internet can be used wisely to build a society which is healthy and open to sharing.

Communication, wherever and however it takes place, has opened up broader horizons for many people. This is a gift of God which involves a great responsibility. I like to refer to this power of communication as "closeness". The encounter between communication and mercy will be fruitful to the degree that it generates a closeness which cares, comforts, heals, accompanies and celebrates. In a broken, fragmented and polarized world, to communicate with mercy means to help create a healthy, free and fraternal closeness between the children of God and all our brothers and sisters in the one human family. ■

Francis

WISE QUOTES FOR REFLECTION

'Too many people miss the silver lining because they are expecting gold'

- Maurice Setter

When you say yes to others make sure you are not saying no to yourself'

- Paulo Coelho

'Even the bravest of creatures have some fear, but it is not enough to stop them from moving in the path they are destined to walk upon'

- Zig Ziglar

'Waking up to see another day is blessings don't take it for granted. Make it count and be happy you are alive'

- Tom Ziglar

Life has many ways of testing a person's will, either by having nothing happen at all or by having everything happen all at once'

- Paulo Coelho

'Don't waste words on people who deserve your silence, sometimes the most powerful thing you can say is nothing at all'

- Mandy Hale

'You need to associate with people that inspire you, people that challenge you to rise higher. People that make you better. Don't waste your valuable time with people that are not adding to your growth. Your destiny is too important'

- Joel Osteen.

'Pain makes a man think. Thoughts make a man wise. Wisdom makes life endurable'

- John Patrick

'Life is like a bicycle, to keep your balance, you must keep moving'

- Albert Einstein

'Hardships often prepare people, for an extraordinary destiny'

- C.S Lewis

Worrying does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, it empties today of its strength'

- Corrie Ten Boom

When you know your value, when you know your worth, you just won't accept anything less but the best in life'

- Dr. Lara Fernandez

ST. MBAAGA SEMINARIANS VISIT THE CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT TO LEARN AND SHARE EXPERIENCES

By Jacinta W. Odongo

A DELEGATION of 12 Seminarians and one priest from St. Mbaaga Major Seminary visited the Uganda Catholic Secretariat (UCS) of Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC) on Thursday April 28, 2016.

According to the Executive Secretary of the Social Communications Department of UEC, Fr. Philip Odii, who was the Master of Ceremony, the aim of the visit was to help the seminarians learn about the activities and programs run by the Secretariat and share experiences.

In his opening remarks, the UEC Secretary General, Msgr John Baptist Kauta expressed his gratitude to the St. Mbaaga administration for allowing the seminarians to visit the Catholic Secretariat. "I thank you very much for taking a day-off to visit our conference. I want you to feel at home, we shall share with you our experiences from all the departments and I am sure you will also give us some more ideas," he said.

Dr. Sam Orach, the Executive Secretary of the Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau, who was the first person to make a presentation, said that the department has registered success as the Catholic Church has a total of 279 health facilities under its umbrella.

"The Health Commission of the UEC,



A cross-section of the seminarians listening to Msgr. Kauta. (INSET) Msgr. Kauta speaking to the Seminarians.

PHOTOBY JACINTA W. ODONGO

through UCMB, performs the national level coordination function. Common policies, approaches and agenda are mapped out here, with the ultimate goal of maintaining catholic health institutions faithful to their mission," he said.

He noted that the Catholic Church in Uganda counts 32 hospitals with 14 health training schools, 250 registered lower level health units and 19 Diocesan Health Co-ordination Offices.

Meanwhile, Mrs Joyce Zako the National Youth Coordinator, under the Lay Apostolate Department, challenged the

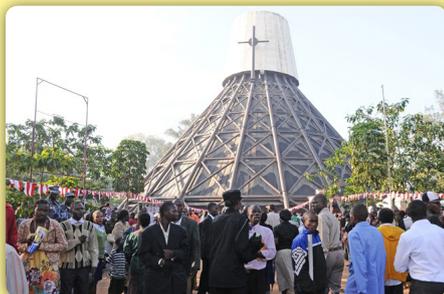
seminarians to be exemplary to the lay persons since the majority of the laity look up to them as their role models.

Notably, the delegation was delighted with way the departments of the UEC conduct their activities. They later visited different departments before their departure.

This is the third time for the seminarians to visit the Secretariat. Earlier this year, seminarians from St. Mary's National Major Seminary, Ggaba visited the premises. Last year a different group from the same Seminary visited the institution. ■

THEME CHOSEN FOR THE 2016 UGANDA MARTYRS DAY CELEBRATION

By Jacinta W. Odongo



WITH LESS THAN A MONTH to the 2016 Uganda Martyrs Day celebration at Namugongo Catholic Shrine, the theme for this year's event has been chosen.

The theme, which has been extracted from the Gospel of John 8:32 is, "The Truth Will Make You Free." The June 3 celebrations will be animated by the Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana on behalf of Kampala Ecclesiastical Province. The theme was unveiled on April 21, 2016 by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa, Bishop of Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese and Vice Chairman of the Uganda Episcopal

Conference (UEC) at a press conference that was held at the Uganda Catholic Secretariat (UCS) premises.

"The Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana last presided over the Martyrs Day celebrations in 1994 that was shortly after the visit of Pope John Paul II to Uganda in 1993," Bishop Zziwa said. "The same Diocese is privileged this year to take the celebrations to a higher level following the successful visit of Pope Francis to Uganda last year, and the improvement of Namugongo shrine and grounds," he added.

The annual celebration commemorates the heroic faith of the 45 Martyrs, both Catholic and Anglican, who were burnt to death on the orders of Kabaka Mwanga II, the then king of Buganda between 1885 and 1887. Twenty two Catholic Martyrs were beatified on June 6, 1920, by Pope Benedict XV, and on October 18 1964, Pope Paul VI canonized them as Saints.

In addition to the Catholic Martyrs,

there are two Catechists from Paimol; Blessed Daudi Okelo and Blessed Gildo Irwa who were killed in 1918. The two catechists were beatified by John Paul II on 20th October, 2002.

Meanwhile, Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese and the UCS, which constitute the central organizing committee, are working hand in hand to make the required preparations. So far, 11 committees have been formed comprising of members from Kiyinda-Mityana, members from the UCS and government representatives.

The committees include Pastoral and Liturgy, Transport and Protocol, Publicity and Communication, Catering and Welfare, Construction and Decoration, Finance, Security, Pilgrims, Medical, Sanitation and Ushering.

The preparations and the actual celebrations have been estimated to cost at least Ushs450m. ■

AMECEA TRAINS NATIONAL ICT PERSONS

By Bernard James, TEC National Communications Coordinator and Pamela Adinda, AMECEA Online News Reporter



PHOTOBY JACINTA W. ODONGO

(LEFT) Participants pose for a group photo. (RIGHT) Participants attend the ICT Workshop.

IN ITS effort to promote the work of Evangelization through ICT and new media technology, the Social Communications Department of AMECEA held a training workshop for ICT Personnel from AMECEA member conferences as one of the capacity building strategies of the department.

The workshop was a combination of basic training on WordPress and Website development as well as a meeting forum for national ICT Personnel to find a way forward for future collaborations through networking among AMECEA Member Countries.

The Head of Social Communications Department of AMECEA Rev. Fr. Chrisantus Ndaga who addressed the participants at the beginning of the four-day workshop on Tuesday April 5, emphasized on the need for the Church's presence online by embracing the new media technology.

"This training will greatly facilitate

information sharing to reach as many people as possible especially young people who are always in social media networks," said Fr. Ndaga.

He explained that AMECEA decided to conduct the training on Information and communication Technology (ICT) for communication experts to help broaden their spectra and build their capacity so that they can inform, educate and evangelize communities. He added that there are many things the Church is doing which are very important to the society but they are not known by the public.

"Through such trainings, you will be able to reduce the cost of hiring out or outsourcing to create your websites and blogs because you will be in the position to perform such tasks," he explained.

Meanwhile, the first AMECEA Secretary of Social Communications Department Rev. Fr. Joseph Healey, MM, who was present at the beginning of the

training appealed to the participants to ensure that all communication offices in the conferences make ICT a priority.

"It is important that you implement in your respective conferences what you are going to learn during this workshop so that the work of evangelization can be widely promoted," said Fr. Healey whose sentiments were echoed by the Training facilitator Mr. Peter Kyalo from the University of Nairobi.

Speaking after the training, the participants were grateful for the initiative AMECEA is taking and wished that the same knowledge could trickle down to the conference level where many dioceses could benefit.

The workshop was attended by participants from Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia. ■

KEY EVENTS FOR MAY 2016

May 1- LABOUR DAY

Labour Day is a public holiday celebrated in all states and territories in the world. It recognizes workers' contributions towards the nation's economy.

May 8- ASCENSION OF THE LORD

The Ascension of Our Lord, which celebrates the day on which the Risen Christ, in the sight of His apostles, ascended bodily into Heaven (Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11), is a moveable feast. Like the dates of most other moveable feasts, the date of the

Ascension depends on the date of Easter. Ascension Thursday always falls 40 days after Easter (counting both Easter and Ascension Thursday), but since the date of Easter changes every year, the date of Ascension does as well.

May 8- WORLD COMMUNICATION DAY

World Communication is celebrated on the Sunday before Pentecost and this year it will fall on May 8. Different dioceses across the world will mark this event in their respective dioceses.

May 15- PENTECOST SUNDAY/

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY DAY

Pentecost Sunday marks the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the Virgin Mary. It is also a moveable feast. Pentecost always falls 50 days after Easter (counting both Easter and Pentecost), but since the date of Easter changes every year, the date of Pentecost does as well. It comes 10 days after the Ascension of the Lord and is sometimes known as the 'birthday of the Church'. Pentecost day fulfills Jesus' promise to send the Counselor and Spirit of Truth (confer John 16:5-15).

RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN KENYA EXPRESS CONCERN OVER ELECTORAL COMMISSION APTITUDE AND DEMAND TRANSPARENCY AHEAD OF GENERAL ELECTION NEXT YEAR

By AMECEA Online News Reporter



NCKK General Secretary Reverend Canon Peter Karanja (Center, front row) and other religious leaders address the press after a meeting on Kenya's preparedness for 2017 General Election.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS in Kenya, who recently met under the Kenya Inter Faith Elections Programme (KIEP), have expressed their concerns over the prevailing political activities and especially early campaigns ahead of the 2017 country's general elections and reiterated that it must be free, fair, peaceful and credible.

In their Press statement issued on March 31 2016 at Ol Lerai Jumuia Palace, Nairobi on behalf of Kenya Inter Faith Elections Programme, the religious leaders stated that the greatest hindrance to free, fair, peaceful and credible elections in Kenya has always been the failure by electoral management bodies to enforce the electoral laws, a trend that has been perfected by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission's (IEBC) refusal to implement to provisions of the Elections Act 2011.

"This has resulted in the situation where some people behave as though they are untouchable sacred cows that can commit any manner of elections offences without any repercussions. We wish to inform the IEBC commissioners and staff that their day of emancipation from political patronage will be the day they bar errant individuals from participating in elections. Then, and only then, will Kenyans start taking them seriously," read the statement.

THE GREATEST HINDRANCE TO FREE, FAIR, PEACEFUL AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN KENYA HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE FAILURE BY ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES TO ENFORCE THE ELECTORAL LAWS, A TREND THAT HAS BEEN PERFECTED BY THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION'S (IEBC) REFUSAL TO IMPLEMENT TO PROVISIONS OF THE ELECTIONS ACT 2011.

They have keenly observed the recent events that have demonstrated shortcomings in the capacity of the IEBC to handle various electoral responsibilities. These, alongside the issue of the term of the current leadership, must be candidly addressed. This is especially so since their term will expire soon after the 2017 General Elections. "To this end, we would urge Kenyans to soberly address these issues, and we as religious leaders are willing to participate in the process and possible lead it," they stated.

They urged all the security officers to purpose to ensure that the security and integrity of the 2017 General Elections is maintained and all persons who break the law are dealt with immediately.

To the politicians, the religious leaders urged them to cease making elections a matter of life and death for Kenyans. "It is immoral and sinful for anyone who is seeking a position to casually posit

that Kenyans can die and be maimed just so that they achieve your political ambitions. We are especially disgusted that politicians and aspirants at different levels are creating militias whose sole intent is to visit violence on Kenyans. This must be stopped forthwith," read the statement.

In conclusion, they asked Kenyans not to be deceived by few elites who use social media to propagate hate messages. "We counsel you that the best security against those who are hell-bent on destroying our national cohesion is to speak out against those messages and reject the leaders who espouse the same," read the statement adding that "We especially urge all our youth to refuse to be used by political actors to cause violence and chaos in the country."

The statement was signed by Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB); Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK); Hindu Council of Kenya; National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCKK); National Muslim Leaders Forum (NAMLEF); Organization of African Instituted Churches 90AIC Kenya); Seventh Day Adventist Church; Shia Ithnasharia Muslim Association (SHIA) and Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM).

Kenya is set for general election on 8th August 2017. ■

ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE NEW NUNCIO TO USA

Vatican Radio



INTERNET PHOTO

Pope Francis poses with Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the new Apostolic Nuncio to the United States

ON TUESDAY APRIL 12 Pope Francis appointed Archbishop Christophe Pierre as the new Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America. Archbishop Pierre, a native of France, was previously the Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico. He replaces Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, who reached the age of retirement earlier this year, as prescribed by canon law. Archbishop Viganò had held the position since 2011.

Archbishop Pierre was the previous Apostolic Nuncio to Mexico, an appointment he assumed in 2007. Prior to that he served as an ambassador to both Haiti and Uganda between 1998-2007. ■

POPE TAKES 12 SYRIAN REFUGEES WITH HIM ON PLANE BACK TO ROME

Vatican Radio



INTERNET PHOTO

Pope Francis greets Syrian refugees he brought to Rome from the Greek island of Lesbos, at Ciampino airport in Rome April 16, 2016. The pope concluded his one-day visit to Greece by bringing 12 Syrian refugees to Italy aboard his flight.

POPE FRANCIS took three Syrian families and their six children back with him on the plane to Italy when he left the Greek island of Lesbos on April 16, after his six-hour visit there.

The 12 Syrian refugees were chosen from amongst those who were already present in the refugee camp on Lesbos before the recent deal was signed between the EU and Turkey.

The Director of the Holy See's Press Office, Father Federico Lombardi, said the Pope had wished to make a gesture of welcome and solidarity on behalf of the refugees and the initiative had been organized and made possible

during discussions between the (Vatican) Secretariat of State and the relevant Greek and Italian authorities.

All the members of the three Syrian refugee families are Muslims. Two of the families come from Damascus and the third one comes from Deir Azzor which is located in an area controlled by the so-called Islamic State group.

The homes of all three families were destroyed by shelling. The Vatican will be responsible for the costs involved in housing and taking care of the refugees. Father Lombardi said the Sant'Egidio community will be providing the initial shelter for them. ■

KEY EVENTS FOR MAY 2016

FROM PAGE 8

May 22- SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

Trinity Sunday, a moveable feast also known as Holy Trinity Sunday, is celebrated a week after Pentecost Sunday in honor of the most fundamental of Christian beliefs. Trinity Sunday celebrates the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the three Persons of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (They cannot be divided. The Sundays following Pentecost, until Advent, are numbered from this day). The Thursday after Trinity Sunday is observed as the Feast of Corpus Christi.

May 22- UGANDA MARTYRS' WALK OF FAITH

Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese together with the Uganda Episcopal Conference and Uganda Tourism Board has organised

the Uganda Martyrs' Walk of Faith from Munyonyo Martyrs' Shrine to St. Matia Mulumba Parish in Old Kampala.

May 29- THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (or in Latin Corpus Christi) commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist. This feast of Corpus Christi is a moveable feast, which means that it depends on the date of Easter Sunday. It is celebrated on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. The feast was introduced in the late 13th century to encourage the faithful to give special honor to the institution of the Holy Eucharist and to the Blessed Sacrament. Today, the feast is commonly used as an opportunity for public Eucharistic processions, which

serves as a sign of common faith and adoration.

May 31- FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrates the visit of the Mother of God, with the child Jesus in her womb, to her cousin Elizabeth, who was herself six months pregnant with the forerunner of Christ, Saint John the Baptist. (At the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel, in response to Mary's question "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" (Luke 1:34), had told her that "thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1:36-27).)

POPE FRANCIS' APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION ON **THE JOY OF LOVE**

Vatican Radio



INTERNET PHOTO

Love and Family - Pope Francis blesses a family at the Vatican

THE VATICAN on Friday April 8, 2016 published Pope Francis' eagerly-awaited Apostolic Exhortation on the family, drawing together almost three years of consultations with Catholics in different countries all over the world.

The lengthy document, entitled 'Amoris Laetitia', or The Joy of Love, affirms the Church's teaching that stable families are the building blocks of a healthy society and a place where children learn to love, respect and interact with others.

At the same time the text warns against idealizing the many challenges facing family life, urging Catholics to care for, rather than condemning, all those whose lives do not reflect the teaching of the Church.

In particular the document focuses on the need for "personal and pastoral discernment" for individuals, recognizing that "neither the Synod, nor this Exhortation could be expected to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases".

"The Apostolic Exhortation is a precious gift for our Church, as well as families and society in Asia," especially since it comes in this Jubilee Year of Mercy," Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the Archbishop of Mumbai and President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, told Asia News on April 12 about *Amoris Laetitia*.

For the Cardinal, who holds a doctorate

in canon law from the Pontifical Urbaniana University and a diploma in jurisprudence from the Pontifical Gregorian University, "Amoris laetitia outlines clearly that marriage is joy, and blessing, a gift from God." Indeed, the Holy Father "speaks of the beauty and the integrity of this sacrament.

The document, which weaves together the deliberations of the two Synods on the family celebrated in 2014 and 2015, "endorses the social doctrine of the Church" in continuity with the "magisterium of John Paul II and Benedict XVI". Under no circumstances does it represent a break with Catholic teaching.

It is also "an invitation to apply the medicine of mercy and tenderness," by promoting an inclusive pastoral ministry that "seeks out those who live on the margins," he explained.

"Citing Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Pontiff notes that "love is more than a mere feeling' (n. 94), but is instead a willful commitment to embark on a definite path by addressing challenging things - being patient, putting aside envy and rivalry, caring about each other . . ."

Cardinal Oswald noted that in Asia, families are traditionally very united. "It is heartening that the Pope connects family concerns with social concerns. He argues that families can only flourish

if our societies are set up to support them. Bishops and priests can have a positive impact on our pastoral approach. I would like to see our seminarians study this document, and undergo a change in mind-set and heart. Including rather than excluding is the heart of Jesus," he said.

Meanwhile, the Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Archbishop Arthur Roche, said Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris laetitia* (the Joy of Love), is one of the "best documents I have read."

"It's very easily read - and it's a very joyful read - because it's a very encouraging message that the Holy Father is giving to the world on marriage and the family," Archbishop Roche told Vatican Radio.

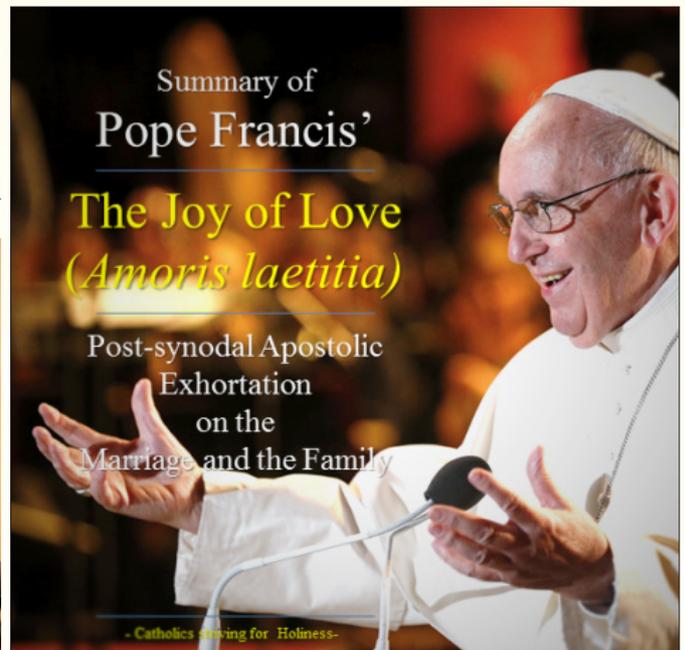
"It's a light in a very obscure world which really doesn't believe in the family and in marriage as much as the Church does, so it will be of enormous encouragement to people throughout the world as they make their steps towards marriage - particularly young couples who live in a world that is full of challenges and full of change - because here we have a document which is joyful, and brings to them, really, the tenderness of God," he added. ■

THE JOY OF LOVE

(AMORIS LAETITIA)

Fr. Lazar Arasu SDB, www.arasulazar.org

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LOVE, JOY AND PEACE are basic human needs and we are all searching for them desperately, perhaps without defining its need and search. All religions, humane philosophies and theories advocate these cardinal virtues. Knowing its need and defining its search will surely put our life into right perspective and facilitate its possession. In a figure of speech Jesus called these virtues as 'The Kingdom of God'. He further advocated, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all other things will be added unto you".

A few days ago, Pope Francis published a long document titled "The Joy of Love" (*Amoris Laetitia*) giving practical guidelines on love, marriage, sexuality and family. It is a conclusion of two meetings (synods) on family issues the Church had with bishops and selected members from all over the world which took place in Rome in the last two years. Popular media and secular journalists often tend to narrow down such religious documents to a few peripheral matters which are often not the focal point of discussion. As usual the media painted this document red with the issues of homosexuality and divorce. As usual Pope Francis has been very down to earth in approaching issues that affect our daily life that need serious attention.

In the past years he has spoken on environment, religious tolerance, refugee crisis and peace in the world, etc. Now this document "The Joy of Love" is loaded with practical wisdom giving guidelines on issues such as preparation for marriage, challenges in family life, pastoral care of families within the

church, upbringing of children, and the like. The document which runs into over 260 pages is thought provoking. Humanly speaking it appeals to 'all people of goodwill', not just to Catholic Christians.

Article 260 of The Joy of Love says, "...Parents need to consider what they want their children to be exposed to, and this necessarily means being concerned about who is providing their entertainment, who is entering their rooms through television and electronic devices, and with whom they are spending their free time. Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern, and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time, will we be able to shield them from harm. Vigilance is always necessary and neglect is never beneficial. Parents have to help prepare children and adolescents to confront the risk, for example, of aggression, abuse or drug addiction."

On the education of children within the family we cannot be more practical, thoughtful and humane as the Pope speaks here. These lines are gentle reminder to parents who constantly struggle in their families to monitor and guide their growing children. These are lines of challenge, admonition and practical lesson. The pope is calling on parents to be attentive to the needs and behaviours of growing children. He is asking the parents to be knowledgeable in matters that young people are into such as social media, entertainment and things that can cause addiction.

His words such as consider, concern,

POPULAR MEDIA AND SECULAR JOURNALISTS OFTEN TEND TO NARROW DOWN SUCH RELIGIOUS DOCUMENTS TO A FEW PERIPHERAL MATTERS WHICH ARE OFTEN NOT THE FOCAL POINT OF DISCUSSION. AS USUAL THE MEDIA PAINTED THIS DOCUMENT RED WITH THE ISSUES OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND DIVORCE.

devote time, shield, vigilance and prepare are inviting us to be available to children, be there for them, enter into their world and accompany them in their growing up. The Pope also stands for the rights and freedom of children. He advocates healthy and rightful space for children to grow in freedom. Only in a healthy atmosphere of free-will children will grow responsibly, creatively and lovingly. Proverbially he says, "Time is greater than space", meaning it is better and easy to spend time with them than to control their movements and watch children all over the place, which is almost impossible. "What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy." (art. 261)

The Pontiff rhetorically answers the ultimate question of how and why we love children, "The questions I would put to parents are these: "Do we seek to understand 'where' our children really are in their journey? Where is their soul, do we really know? And above all, do we want to know?" Pope Francis' words are authentic, compelling and absorbing the mind and soul. Heeding them is good for our family and upbringing of our children. Let us educate ourselves in love. ■

