



TRIBUTE TO THE ENVIRONMENT

"For most of history, man has had to fight nature to survive; in this century he is beginning to realize that, in order to survive, he must protect it"

*Jacques-Yves Cousteau
(French oceanographer, 1910-1997)*

CARITAS ATHENS



WISHES

The Birth of God
is the moment when redemption
meets hope!
May Life with Jesus dominate the world
and the Holy Light of Christmas
illuminate the hearts of
all people on Earth!
Merry Christmas
&
Happy 2020!

fr. Ioannis Patsis
Vice President & Director
Caritas Athens

CARITAS ATHENS MAGAZINE

OWNER: CATHOLIC
ARCDIOCESE OF ATHENS
DIRECTOR: Fr. IOANNIS PATSIS
EDITING: HELEN CARABOTT
TRANSLATION OF TEXTS:
GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS
PAGINATION-PRINTING:
TYPOKYKLADIKI S.A.

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CONTENTS

- "The environment is calling us to change". Message from the Archbishop of Athens' Catholics
- June 5: World Environment Day (UN)
- September 1st: World Prayer Day for the Care of Creation
- Climate change & Impact
- Europeans fear Climate Change more than Migration, Unemployment & Terrorism
- Climate emergency in the European Union
- The infrastructures of the '50s, '60s and '70s are suffering because of climate change
- Europe dumps 12 million tons of electric trash annually
- Largest "green" wall in Europe is created in London
- What everyone can do to reduce climate change
- Leftover food should go to charity, not waste
- British supermarket chain is testing the abolishment of packaging
- Greek supermarket abolishes disposable plastics
- Planet earth emits a danger signal/Excerpts as food for thought
- Seventy-one million displaced by war & conflicts
- Three speed displaced
- Mediterranean, a Sea of Souls
- When World Day for Migrants & Refugees was established
- 29 September 2019: 105th World Day for Migrants & Refugees
- A Caritas Athens event in the framework of the "Global Week of Action"
- The monument dedicated to Migrants at St. Peter's square
- Success stories of Caritas Athens beneficiaries
- 17 October: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- Speech by Pope Francis on Hunger & Food Insecurity
- A pioneer in the fight against poverty wins the Nobel Economics Prize 2019
- "The Economy of Francesco". An initiative by the Holy Father on the Environment & the Economy
- Celebration & Holy Mass Caritas Patron Saint
- Tribute of Secours Catholique on the actions of Caritas Hellas & Caritas Athens
- Visit of Caritas Spain executives to Caritas Athens
- Caritas Athens in Malta
- Visit of Caritas Athens to the Emigrants Commission & to Caritas Malta
- "Turn Love into Action". Caritas Athens Offer Campaign
- Introducing the work of St. Paul's Parochial Caritas
- Caritas Athens & the Association "Together for Children" distributed personal hygiene items to 112 young girls
- New Caritas Athens website
- Publication of Caritas Athens Calendar for 2020
- Blood Donations
- Caritas Athens participated in Carrier Days by Deree College
- Visit/tour of the House-Museum of Angelos & Lito Katakouzinou
- Excursion to Paiania for the cutting of New Year's cake of the Third Age Sector
- Annual event of Caritas Athens for 2020
- Pope Francis on the meaning & importance of the nativity scene
- Ossana: The Italian mountain village with the ...thousand nativity scenes
- "Holy Night" The most famous Christmas song completed 200+1 years of history
- Caritas Internationalis President baptized 450 street children in the Philippines
- Prayer with electronic rosary

"THE ENVIRONMENT IS CALLING US TO CHANGE!" MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS' CATHOLICS

This issue of **Caritas Athens** is very timely focused on the "environment", a topic which we are very aware of lately and we observe it with concern.

"**Mother Earth**" as our ancestors called her, "**our sister Earth**" as Saint Francis of Assisi called her, is one to which we have little respect and love!

Pope Francis, in his **2015** Circular "**Laudato Si**", lists many of the signs of disrespect and contempt that we show to our Earth! Pollution of the atmosphere due to the fuels we use to cook and heat, transportation and industries, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, pesticides, pollution from industrial, chemical and radioactive waste, large greenhouse gas concentration, which started to upset the climate with immeasurable disasters in people, production, and property.

Safe and clean water is starting to run out in many places, millennial glaciers are melting rapidly, fish are being reduced and poisoned, forests are being destroyed by logging and fires, many species of plants and animals are disappearing rapidly.

All this upheaval, the **Pope** tells us, is due to humans' reckless and selfish intervention and the consequences fall upon man himself and especially upon the weakest on Earth.

I want to focus our attention on a point **Pope Francis** mentions in his circular "**Laudato Si**". At that point, at numbers 203-204, he tells us:

"Since the market tends to **promote extreme consumerism** in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending. Compulsive consumerism is one example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals" (...) "This paradigm leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume" (...) "The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume" (...) "Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction".

A little example, my brothers: The hundreds of bags of clothes and shoes we gather and send, whenever there is a disaster, seem to show our benevolent feelings. Deep down, these large quantities reveal how big victims of consumption we are. We buy, use, and put things aside, not because they are outdated, but because we are bored or because the display window or the advertisement showed us something new that we like. And we buy it because we have money, not because we really need it.

And then, adorned with all these unnecessary things, we will go to church to honor our Savior who came to save us born in a... poor crib!!!

Therefore, is it not true -as **Pope Francis** and **Patriarch Bartholomew** tell us- that we have the need to change? Do we, perhaps, need this exact change to humbly beg from the **Bethlehem infant**?

Faternally,
† Sevastianos
Archbishop of Athens' Catholics
Apostolic Surrogate
Catholic Archdiocese of Rhodes

JUNE 5: WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY (UN)

On June 5, the planet celebrates the **World Environment Day**, which has been **the UN's** main event since **1972**, to remind us of the importance of the **Natural Environment** and the respect we owe to it, and to inform the public on environmental problems facing humanity.

The interest of global attention is focused every year on a topic which is of environmental concern. Thus, the theme for **2019** focused on **combating air pollution**, as nine in ten **people** around the globe are exposed to levels of air pollution that exceed the safe levels set by the **World Health Organization**.

The slogan was "**Beat Air Pollution**" and the world celebration host was **China** (the main polluter), who called on the planet to consider how everyone can change their daily lives so that they can reduce air pollution, which contributes to global warming and has an impact on its health.

In a statement, **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** called for combating one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time: "It is time to act decisively. My message to governments is clear: taxation of pollutants, termination of fossil fuel subsidies, and avoidance of new coal plants. We need a green economy, not a gray economy."

It is worth noting that in the context of raising public awareness, **the UN** introduced the following year (**2020**) as the **International Year for Plant Health** and **2022** as the **International Year of Traditional Fisheries and Aquaculture**.

As we go through the **UN Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020)**, let's remember the **International Decades** that have been established in relation to the **Environment** and some of them are already in progress:

2021-2030 International Decade of Ecosystem Restoration

2021-2030 International Decade for Oceanic Science for Sustainability Development

2019-2028 International Decade for Action on Family Agriculture

2018-2028 International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development

2016-2025 United Nations Decade on Nutritional Action

2014-2024 UN International Decade on Sustainable Energy for All

Three decades, in the recent past were dedicated to the Environment:

2006-2016 Decade of Rehabilitation and Sustainable Development for Communities that were affected by the Chernobyl Disaster (1986)

2005-2015 International Decade of Action, "Water for Life"

2005-2014 United Nations Decade for Sustainable Education Development

The United Nations has also dedicated the following years to:

2016 International Year of Legumes

2015 World Land Year

2014 International Family Farming Year

2013 International Year of Water Cooperation

2013 International Year of Quinoa (scientific name of *Chenopodium quinoa* cereal)

2012 International Year of Sustainable Energy for All

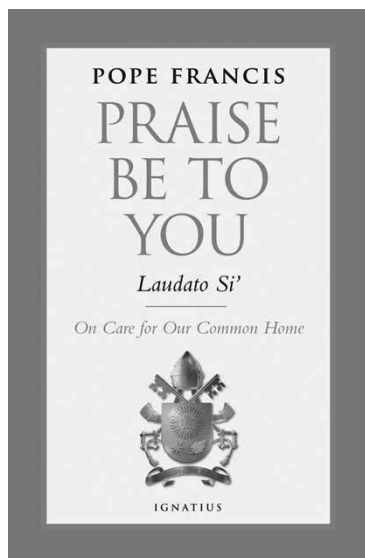
2011 International Year of Forests

2010 International Year of Biodiversity



SEPTEMBER 1st: WORLD PRAYER DAY FOR THE CARE OF CREATION

In **June 2015**, **Pope Francis** presented the circular "**Praise be to you**" ("*Laudato si'*") for the care of the common residence. Sharing the concern of **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos**, who had instituted a prayer for the protection of the natural environment since **1989**, and being motivated by the intervention of the **Ecumenical Patriarchate representative**, the **Metropolite of Pergamos, fr. Ioannis Zizioulas**, he sent on **August 6, 2015**, the letter for the incorporation of "**World Prayer Day for the Care of Creation**" to the **Catholic Church** as well to the **Presidents** of the former **Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace** and the **Pontifical Council for the Unity of Christians**. Hence it is celebrated every year on the **1st of September**.



The **Circular** has been developed around the concept of integrated ecology, as a model capable of linking one's fundamental relationships with God, with himself, with other human beings, with creation and suggests dialogue as a method of dealing with and resolving environmental issues problems. It presents the truths of the **Gospel** and is a challenge for every person. Normally Pontifical documents are addressed to the Bishops of the Church or to the faithful. This time **Pope Francis** sends his message to all people: "In the face of the global deterioration of the environment, I want to address every human being living on this planet."

"The goal of the dialogue is the urgent appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environment challenge, we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all".

This year's **Pontifical** message for the **5th World Creation Prayer Day** emphasizes that "degradation has increased in recent decades: Constant pollution, the continued use of fossil fuels, intensive agricultural exploitation and deforestation are causing global temperatures to rise above safe levels... We have caused a climate emergency that gravely threatens nature and life itself, including our own". That is why he invites all people every year from **September 1st** to **October 4th** to dedicate their prayer to the salvation of **Creation**.

A prayer for our Earth

The **prayer** is a call for greater attention on Earth and for human relationships:

"**All-powerful God**, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Oh God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace".

Stanislaos Stouraitis

CLIMATE CHANGE & IMPACT

The destruction of the environment and the increasing impact of human activity on the planet's ecosystems, on which the stability and well-being of human societies are directly dependent, are a matter of global concern to the world, as they are the most serious challenge **Earth** has ever faced!

The term "**climate change**" describes the gradual warming of the planet's atmosphere, which has been recorded for the last **150 years** and has steadily accelerated in recent decades. Due to the



phenomenon of overheating, **everything is changing: nature, atmosphere**, weather conditions, **living and working conditions, health and economy!**

The environmental burden proves that man has not - unfortunately yet - realized that he is part of the creation and that **his relationship with her is organic**, since its existence is an extension of the natural environment to which it is associated with an indestructible umbilical cord like the **fetus** with its **mother!**

It is therefore imperative that we realize all the gravest consequences of our frivolous behavior (consciously or unconsciously),

in order to identify the decisive ways in which we can restore, as far as possible, the disturbed balance between the interactive relationship between man and the natural environment and the proper functioning of the earth's ecosystems, leaving the legacy of "**good and long live**" to future generations.

Impacts caused by the lack of respect of man for the environment

To the environment

- **Soil, water, air pollution** (soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, crop intensification, eutrophication, chemical fertilizers, exposure to mixtures of chemicals, pollutants releases, climate change, acid rain, gaseous agglomeration, destruction of stratospheric ozone, radioactivity, electromagnetic fields, ice melting (polarization), sea level rise, noise pollution, air pollution, seas, rivers, lakes and aquifers)
- **Extreme natural phenomena** (hurricanes, thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, floods, fires, landslides, rising temperature, droughts, groundwater depletion, water scarcity)
- **Destruction of flora and fauna**, as nature cannot continuously reproduce the wealth that is being removed so rapidly (deforestation and deforestation, endangered species, species extinction, soil erosion, inability to degrade plastics and processed materials)
- **Consumption of raw materials** (overuse of resources, energy problem)
- **Aesthetic abuse of nature** (expropriated areas, burnt forests, rubbish dumps)

To the person

- **Physical** (human health degeneration, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, cancer, asthma, allergies, infectious diseases, reproductive and neurodevelopmental disorders, industrial diseases, genetic risks, mutations, toxicities, sleep disturbances, problems in the food chain, eating scandals)
- **Psychological** (anxiety, tension, aggression, melancholy, depression, nervousness, phobias)
- **Social** (conflicts over natural resources and water, commercialization of natural wealth)
- **Financial** (material damage, increase in energy prices, blow to agricultural production and tourism)

Helen Carabott

EUROPEANS FEAR CLIMATE CHANGE MORE THAN MIGRATION, UNEMPLOYMENT & TERRORISM

Almost **half of Europeans (47%)** view **climate change** as a primary threat to their lives, more than **unemployment, large-scale immigration** and worries about **terrorism**!

According to the first of four **European Investment Bank (EIB)** studies, published on **November 29th**, a sample of **30.000** respondents from **30** countries (including **China** and the **US**), climate change concern is even higher in **China** than the **EU**, with **73%** considering it the greatest danger to society, compared to **49%** in **USA**, where most citizens are more concerned about their access to health services!

Overall, **82%** of **Europeans** believe that climate change has an impact on their daily lives, a perception that reaches **98%** in **China** and **76%** in the **US**.

Furthermore, the study also shows that **41%** of **young Europeans** between the **ages of 15 and 29**, especially from southern countries such as Spain, Greece and France, believe that they should move to another country because of climate change.

The **European Investment Bank** belongs to the Member States of the **European Union**. It is the largest international public lending institution whose mission is to finance projects that contribute to achieving **EU** objectives. In this case it will support investment action to **combat climate change**, a priority for the new **Commission**, which took office on **1st December**, wishing to turn the whole of the **European Union** into a **carbon-neutral** region by **2050**, after a **50%** reduction in emissions by **2030**. This also requires the consent of all European governments before the target becomes binding. However, some coal-dependent countries, such as **Poland** and some of its **Eastern European** allies, oppose such an ambition by vetoing it!



Climate emergency in the European Union

In the meantime, the **European Parliament** in **Strasbourg** has adopted a symbolic resolution declaring a "**climate emergency**" in the **European Union** to put pressure on governments to take **action against global warming**, the **adoption** of a **common commitment** to **reduce emissions** just before the crucial **UN summit** for **Climate**, in early **December** in **Madrid**.

"The fact that **Europe** is the first continent to declare a state of emergency for climate and environment sends a buzzing signal to citizens and the rest of the world," said **Pascal Canfin**, **President** of the **Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety of the European Parliament**, which also initiated the resolution.

Several **EU** Member States, such as **Spain, France**, and the **United Kingdom**, have already made similar declarations of a state of emergency. Outside Europe, only **Canada, Argentina** and **Bangladesh** have taken similar actions.

The infrastructures of the '50s, '60s and '70s are suffering because of climate change

Roads, bridges, ports, airports, internationally but also in our country are seriously at risk from the effects of **climate change** (floods, high temperatures, heavy rainfall etc.) and must be adapted promptly, with the necessary investments to withstand extreme weather, which is no longer a rarity!

These were highlighted in a **Press Conference** organized by the **Greek Logistics Company** in

November on the **1st International Conference** on "**Climate Change and its Impact on Transport Systems**". As noted, infrastructures built in the **1950s**, **'60s** and **'70s** are currently **suffering** from **climate change**.

GIS has already mapped transport infrastructures together with scenarios for potential impacts (flood risk, high temperatures, etc.).

Indicatively, the scenarios considered in a specific study for the period **2051-2080** indicate that large areas of **Greece** but also of **Portugal**, **Spain**, **France**, **Italy** and **Turkey** may have **50-60** more days of heat per year and less rainfall. Also **21 European highways** (among them the E55) are recorded, which will have to be analyzed for extremely high temperatures, while **169 ports** of our country will face the risk of rising sea levels in **2080**.

Overall, the risks for **Greece**, though serious, are lower than the ones for other countries, even European ones, and, as it is typically pointed out, it is cheaper for a country to upgrade its infrastructure than to rebuild it after a disaster. Risks that threaten transport include, for example, bridge collapse, road surface erosion, distortion of railways and they have a far wider impact, not only on transport but also on trade, tourism and the economy. Climate change damage to roads and railways is already estimated to reach **\$22 billion** worldwide annually.

Source: ANA-MPA

EUROPE DUMPS 12 MILLION TONS OF ELECTRIC TRASH ANNUALLY

Europe ranks **second**, after **Asia**, in electrical waste, with **12 million tons of electric waste** per year, according to the **Platform for Accelerating Cyclical Economy**!

The **European Commission** wants to implement a directive on **new eco-design** in **EU countries** to ensure that **home appliances** have a **longer operating life**.

According to it, by **2021**, manufacturers across **Europe** should **improve** both the **recovery capacity** and **service life** of appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators, electric motors, LED screens, while the same will not be the case, at least not yet, for devices such as laptops, cell phones, small appliances (e.g. electric shavers), blenders and toasters, as the plan incorporates them into the directive at a ...later stage!

Manufacturers also need to be more precise in the information on their product labels about energy consumption and provide **spare parts** for at least ten years after purchase. The **Commission** estimates that by **2030** up to **167 terrawatthours** of energy could be saved per year.



This could be achieved with **high energy efficiency** devices and with a **long-life span**. Regarding **electricity** and **market prices**, the **European Commission** notes that **EU citizens** in the future **will save** about **€150** per year. It is not yet clear, however, how long the device should last in the future.

In the meantime, the **European Environment Office** has reported on the impact of extending the lifespan of electronic devices. Calculations show that if **washing machines** in **Europe** were operating for **an additional year**, they would have the same **positive impact** on the environment as if **133.000 cars** would **stop circulating**!

However, what may limit the overall success of the new regulations is the cost of spare parts, but the plan unfortunately does not include a reduction in their prices.

Source: Deutsche Welle

THE LARGEST "GREEN" WALL IN EUROPE IS CREATED IN LONDON

Issues related to **climate change** and **air pollution** are now a matter of concern for both scientists and builders of the future!

As part of its impact on local environmental conditions, **London**, in the coming years, will acquire the **Citicape House**, a multi-purpose building that will have the **Europe's** largest ecological "**green**" wall, with the aim of improving its image to a well-known and central area, as well as the quality of its atmosphere!

According to the architectural plans by **Sheppard Robson**, the building will ... be surrounded by a variety of 400.000 plants, which will absorb more than **eight tons of carbon** and will produce **six tons of oxygen** annually.



In addition, this new construction, which will replace the existing one, which houses offices before World War II, will have **11 floors** and will house, among other things, a **five-star hotel, events venues, bars, spa** and **restaurant**. One of the most interesting features of the building will be the terrace, from where visitors can enjoy the view of the **British** capital, while the ground floor will be connected to a small park, which is already at the back. It will also have an integrated rainwater harvesting mechanism to water the green wall and reduce the pressure on its existing internal structure.

WHAT EVERYONE CAN DO TO REDUCE CLIMATE CHANGE

To help the prevention of global destruction by reversing the phenomenon of climate change, we must all contribute:

-We consume less and recycle more

- We reduce waste
- We buy quantities of food that we are sure we will consume
- We do not buy a lot of clothes. What we do not use we offer to people in need, to institutions, NGOs, or recycling centers, or we sell them
- We recycle paper, plastic, glass, aluminum and textiles
- We dispose of batteries, electrical appliances, inks, cables, chargers and lamps in the special recycling bins installed at Municipalities or in shops with collection systems.
- We offer non-expired medicines to Community Pharmacies, Nursing Homes, Institutions, or NGOs, and we return expired medicines to pharmacies that have an Expired Medicines Collection System in collaboration with the National Organization for Medicines and the Panhellenic Pharmacists Association
- We prefer reusable shopping bags (cloth or wicker baskets)
- We do not use plastic bags

-We change the way we eat

- We limit the consumption of meat and meat products, as the production units are responsible for the 51% of gas emissions, in a global level while up to 2,400 gallons of water are used to produce one kilogram of meat

In addition, cows produce around 568 billion liters of methane daily (25 to 100 times more dangerous than carbon dioxide)

- We do not consume semi-finished products
- We buy seasonal food from local producers not imported from distant countries
- We grow vegetables and fruits even if we live in a small apartment (balcony)

-We are careful about transport. Fewer cars = less exhaust emissions

- We prefer group transportation by car, with friends or acquaintances
- We use bus, tram, subway, train, trolley
- We ride a bike
- We walk more. It also benefits our health

-We limit electrical energy & heating

- We are replacing old technology lamps with energy saving lamps
- We turn off the lights when we leave a room or home
- We turn off our TV, computer or stereo when we are not using them
- We do not leave electrical appliances on standby mode (red light)
- We use solar energy (solar water heater) to heat water
- We wear warm clothes indoors even when using the radiator, reducing the temperature of the thermostat slightly

-Water. We are careful to have

- We prefer to take a shower and not a bath by filling the bathtub with water
- We turn the tap on when needed. We do not let water running during showering, hair washing, brushing teeth or sink washing
- We immediately close a dripping faucet and repair it
- We use only the amount of water needed in the kettle, or in the pot
- We only use a sprayer in the garden or at the balcony only if it is really necessary

-We plant a tree

• It will absorb carbon dioxide (responsible for global warming) from the atmosphere. If only 1% of the planet's population had planted at least one tree in its lifetime, the air would have been filtered by 74 million more trees than today

-We respect the flora & fauna

- We do not use pesticides
- We use organic products to care for plants or we make them ourselves
- We use an electric or manual lawn mower, not a gasoline one, if we have a garden
- We make manure for pots or the garden with the food leftovers, collecting it in a composting pile

-We make it ourselves

- Body products such as shampoo, hair conditioner, creams and toothpaste
- Household cleaning products (for glazing, bath, oven, etc.) with natural ingredients (e.g. baking soda and vinegar)
- We remember again grandmother's advice for many uses



H.C.

Leftover food should go to charity, not waste

Recently, **Italy** joined the **international food waste reduction movement**, which is increasingly growing. According to a law, which was passed in **early December**, leftover food from businesses **will be donated to charities** rather than **ending up in the trash!** In fact, the incentive given to companies to comply will not be any fines, but **tax relief!**



It is characteristic that for the time being our neighboring country is spending billions of euros on waste management, so the new bill achieves at least a threefold benefit: **government spending cuts, landfill mitigation** and **better feeding for socially vulnerable groups.**

In **Denmark**, which is among the pioneers of the movement, even **distinguished chefs** have been recruited to create "**leftover**" dishes in an effort by the state to reverse the belief that non-consumed food should be thrown away.

As the supporters of this gesture explain, **most of the food that ends up in trash** is in **excellent condition**. And that in these "**leftovers**" there's no spoiled or expired food, but rather products with **negligible defects**, for example, fruits that are not perfectly shaped and not selected in grocery stores, and slightly damaged cereal boxes and canned foods with torn labels, whose content is 100% edible.

Finally, more and more consumers are choosing to shop from stores like **WeFood**, which sell only leftovers.

France, under a constitutional law that has been in force since **2016**, has banned owners of small and large supermarkets to throw away food that is edible, forcing them to **donate the food** that has not been sold to **socially vulnerable groups**. It must be noted that this law also subjects anyone non-compliant to very severe **penalties**, imposing a **fine of €4.000** for **each violation**.

In the country, more than **5.000 charities** rely on food banks, and thanks to the legislation, almost half of the donations now originate from supermarkets, which is crucial for faster service to those in need.

British supermarket chain is testing the abolishment of packaging

While new research shows that each individual annually consumes quantity of plastic that is equivalent to a ... credit card, in **Britain**, a large supermarket chain, **Waitrose**, with almost **350 outlets nationwide**, decided to test for eleven weeks, in a store in **Oxford**, the abolishment of **disposable plastic packaging**.

Under this pilot program, among others, customers buy **dry food -from lentils to quinoa-** through dispensers placed in the store, plastic film in pots and bouquets has been replaced by 100% recycled paper, while fruits and vegetables are put in cotton bags, in bags that can be composted or, the most fragile, in cardboard boxes. Even drinks are sold in reusable bottles.

Greek supermarket abolishes disposable plastics

Emphasizing on protecting the environment but also on supporting people, **AB Vassilopoulos** announces commitments to **reduce food waste and plastic by 50% by 2025**, replacing **plastic packaging** with **recyclable, recycled** or **compostable material**. Also, among its commitments are the abolishment of disposable plastics that are sold in its network in **2020**, **reduction of the weight of plastic** in many packages, and **increase** in **donating food** to **organizations** and **people who really need it**.

PLANET EARTH EMITS A DANGER SIGNAL

EXCERPTS AS FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Earth (from **Gaia**, the goddess of Greek mythology) is the **third closest planet** to the **Sun**, the **denser** and **fifth largest** in the **Solar System**, among the earth's planets, those with a solid crust and the only known celestial body hosting life. According to indications, through radiometric dating and other sources, it was formed **4,54 billion years ago!**

During the first billion years since its creation, life appeared in the oceans, which began to influence and alter its atmosphere and surface, enhancing the rapid proliferation of both **aerobic** and **anaerobic organisms**. Its **biodiversity** has grown steadily, except when interrupted by mass extinctions. Although scholars estimate that more than **99%** of the species of life (over 5 billion) that have existed on Earth have disappeared, there are still some **10-14 million species which survived**, of which about **1,2 million** have been studied by men, while over **86%** have not even been described.



There are also more **than 7,5 billion people** on planet Earth who depend on the biosphere and its minerals for survival. However, a problem that threatens to ruin the beauty and tranquility of their lives was born in the modern, sophisticated ... civilized, age of technology that we are living in and is no other than **contaminating the environment**.

The **only culprit** for this enormous issue is the **man himself** who broke important rules being indifferent for the nature and thus faces a catastrophic spectacle: **The Earth is in danger of slow death**.

Many are the thoughts of prominent people, who describe the importance of Mother Nature and are a nourishment to our awareness and activation:

- "It is also a season to reflect on our lifestyles, and how our daily decisions about food, consumption, transportation, use of water, energy and many other material goods, can often be thoughtless and harmful... Let us make an effort to change and to adopt more simple and respectful lifestyles! But also, to abandon our dependence on fossil fuels and move, quickly and decisively, towards forms of clean energy."

Pope Francis

- "Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better." **Albert Einstein, German physicist & Nobelist**

- "If we destroy the Earth, there is no other way to go." **Edward Sagan, American astronomer**

- "The Earth is the only thing we all have in common." **Wendell Berry, American writer**

- The earth was not given to us by our parents, but we borrowed it from our children." **John James Audubon, French American ornithologist, naturalist & painter**

- "Sooner or later, we must recognize that the Earth also has the right to live without contamination. What humanity must remember is that it cannot live without Mother Earth ... But the planet can live without humans." **Evo Morales, former President of Bolivia**

- "Nature produces enough to meet every human need, but not enough to meet human greed."

Mahatma Gandhi, Indian politician

- "We're in a giant car heading to a wall and we are all arguing about where we are going to sit." **David Suzuki, Canadian environmentalist**

- "The environment: what nature turns into, when ... it is protected by humans"! **Evgeny Kascheev, Russian think tanker**

- "Only when the last tree is burnt, the last river becomes polluted and the last fish dies, then only the human will realize that he cannot feed himself." **American Indian proverb**

- "Our Good Earth! We could have saved her, but we became so tragically money grabbers and lazy"

Kurt Vonnegut, American science fiction writer

- "If the climate was a bank, you would have saved it already." **Hugo Chávez, former President of Venezuela**

- "If there is a future, it will be green." **Petra Kelly, German environmental activist**

Source: International Business Times

SEVENTY-ONE MILLION DISPLACED BY WAR & CONFLICTS

The number of violently **displaced people** across the globe, in their quest to escape **war, persecution** and all sorts of **conflicts**, has exceeded **70.8 million last year!**

This is the **highest number ever** recorded, according to data from the **UNHCR's** annual "**World Trends**" report, demonstrating that the number of uprooted **doubled** over a 20-year period and increased by **2.3 million (68.500.000)** compared to **2017**, while proportionally it exceeds ... **Thailand's population!**

As noted, the **overall increase** in the number of **displaced persons** continues to surpass **finding**



solutions and **removing obstacles** that make it difficult for people to return to their homes voluntarily, in conditions of security and dignity, a pursuit that is one of the greatest challenges of our time. .

Other solutions include joining the host community or resettling in a third country. However, only **92.400** refugees have been resettled in third countries in **2018**, which represents less than **7%** of those awaiting in the process. About **593.800** refugees were able to return home, and **62.600** were naturalized.

The report further stresses that:

- More than **17 million** people have been displaced either for the **first time** or **repeatedly**, confirming that an enormous number of people is on the move, which is equivalent to **50.000** displaced people **per day** or **one** displaced **every two seconds**.

- Almost **four out of five** refugees are in displacement for at least **five years**. **One in five** is in a displacement situation that lasts **20 years** or more.

- The number of **refugees** worldwide reached **25.9 million** worldwide in **2018** and the one for **asylum seekers** around **3.5 million**.

- **Every second** refugee was a **child**.

- 111.000 children** were found **alone**, without their family.

- Uganda** registered **2.800** refugee **children alone**, up to five years old.

- About **80%** of refugees live in countries adjacent to their countries of origin.

- Refugees** are more likely to live in **cities** or **towns (61%)** than in **rural areas** or **camps**.

- Most** of the new **asylum applications (341.800)** were from **Venezuelan** citizens.

- The proportion of people who are **refugees, asylum seekers** or **internally displaced** in relation to the global population is **1 out of 108**. Ten years ago, it was **1 out of 160**.

- High-income countries** on average host **2.7 refugees** per **1000** inhabitants. The **middle-** and **low-income** countries average **5.8 refugees** per **1000** inhabitants. The **poorest countries** host **one-third** of **all refugees worldwide**.

- Even though the language often used for refugees and immigrants is often divisive, there is, however, a great **wave of generosity** and **solidarity**, especially in communities that already receive an increased number of refugees. Greater action is also being taken by new players such as development agencies, private businesses and individuals.

Three Speed Displaced

According to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** annual report, the **70.8 million** displaced persons were divided into three main categories last year:

The **first one** concerns refugees, that is, those who have been forced to flee their homes due to

war, persecution or conflict. In **2018**, their number (**25.900.000**) was higher than **2017** by **500.000**, including the **5,5 million Palestinians** who fall under the mandate of the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Middle East** (UNRWA).

The **second one** consists of asylum seekers, i.e. those who are outside their country of origin and receive international protection while awaiting the decision. At the end of 2018, there were **3,5 million asylum seekers** worldwide.

The **third** and largest group, consisting of **41,3 million** people, are the **Internally Displaced People (IDPs)**, in their country of origin.

Source: UNHCR

MEDITERRANEAN, A SEA OF SOULS

The Mediterranean has become a "wet grave" since **2014**, when the refugee-migration crisis began. At least **15.000 people** have died during crossing the sea linking the **African continent** and the **Middle East** with **Europe**!

According to the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, in **2018** more than **2.000 migrants** drowned, while in the last five years the highest number of accidents has occurred in the central Mediterranean, between **Libya** and **Italy** (**1 out of 19 migrants**) and the death toll during the crossing of the western Mediterranean towards **Spain** was about **1 out of 70 migrants**.



Last year, **98.160** people reached the European coast, compared to **111.753** in **2017**! The preferred destination for the crossing from **Africa to Europe** is now **Spain**, where arrivals exceeded **49.000** people, followed by **Greece**, with **27.700** arrivals, **Italy** with **22.160**, **Malta** and **Cyprus**.

The numbers, however, were reduced when compared to previous years, even though 2018 has been recorded as the fifth consecutive year where the threshold of **100.000** refugees and immigrants has been exceeded.

During **2019** (until the end of September) the number of drownings in the Mediterranean was more than **1.000**, according to the **UNHCR**.

WHEN WORLD DAY FOR MIGRANTS & REFUGEES WAS ESTABLISHED

The celebration was instituted in **1914**, a few months before the **First World War**, when the **Head of the Catholic Church, Pope Pius X**, facing the fact of millions of Italians leaving their homeland, called on all Christians to pray for the migrants, thus establishing the **World Day of Migrants**.

In the same year, his successor, **Benedict XV**, dedicated this day to supporting the pastoral care of Italian migrants.

Since **1952**, **Migrant Day** has received an international appeal by calling on local churches to choose a date during the liturgical year to celebrate it.

In **1985**, **Pope John Paul II** sent the first message for the Day, and since **2004**, the **Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants** has included **Refugees**.



29 SEPTEMBER 2019
105th WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

On the occasion of the **105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees**, on **September 29**, **Pope Francis** in his message emphasized how **"It's not just about migrants"**, as their presence -and of vulnerable people in general- is an invitation to recover some of those essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity that risk being overlooked in a prosperous society. That is why it is not just about migrants. When we show concern for them, we also show concern for ourselves, for everyone; in taking care of them, we all grow; in listening to them, we also give voice to a part of ourselves that we may keep hidden because it is not well regarded nowadays.

The main points of his message are:



-“Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!” (Mt 14:27). **It is not just about migrants: it is also about our fears.**

The signs of meanness we see around us heighten “our fear of ‘the other’, the unknown, the marginalized, the foreigner... We see this today in particular, faced with the arrival of migrants and refugees knocking on our door in search of protection, security and a better future. But the problem is not that we have doubts and fears. The problem is when they condition our way of thinking and acting to the point of making us intolerant, closed and perhaps even -without realizing it- racist. In this way, fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other, the person different from myself; it deprives me of an opportunity to encounter the Lord”.

-“For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? (Mt 5:46). **It is not just about migrants: it is about charity.** And the highest form of charity is that shown to those unable to reciprocate and perhaps even to thank us in return”.

-“**It is not just about migrants: it is about our humanity.** Compassion strikes the most sensitive chords of our humanity, releasing a vibrant urge to “be a neighbor” to all those whom we see in difficulty”.

-“**Today’s world is increasingly becoming more elitist and cruel towards the excluded.** Developing countries continue to be drained of their best natural and human resources for the benefit of a few privileged markets. Wars only affect some regions of the world, yet weapons of war are produced and sold in other regions which are then unwilling to take in the refugees produced by these conflicts. Those who pay the price are always the little ones, the poor, the most vulnerable, who are prevented from sitting at the table and are left with the “crumbs” of the banquet (Lk 16:19-21). **A development that excludes makes the rich richer and the poor poorer.** A real development, on the other hand, seeks to include all the world’s men and women, to promote their integral growth, and to show concern for coming generations”.

-“Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all” (Mk 10:43-44). **It is not just about migrants: it is about putting the last in first place.** Instead, the true motto of the Christian is, “The last shall be first!” In the logic of the Gospel, the last come first, and we must put ourselves at their service”.

-“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10). **It is not just about migrants: it is about the whole person, about all people.** In Jesus’ words, we encounter the very heart of his mission: to see that all receive the gift of life in its fullness, according to the will of the Father”.

“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). **It is not just about migrants: it is about building the city of God and man.** We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community”.

A CARITAS ATHENS EVENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE "GLOBAL WEEK OF ACTION"

As part of the **"Share the Journey"** campaign during **Caritas Internationalis' Global Week of Action (September 29 to October 6)** for the celebration of the **105th World Day of Migrants & Refugees**, **Caritas Athens** organized an introductory event and a children's painting exhibition, entitled **"My Life in Athens"**, with creations from children hosted in its shelters.



On **Monday 30th of September**, in the crowded hall of Patission Street building, adults and minors beneficiaries learned about the history of the establishment of this **World Day**, from **Pope Pius the 10th**, a few months before World War I erupted in **1914**, and they attended with great interest a presentation of both the work of **Caritas Athens** and the work of **Caritas Internationalis**, in **165 countries** worldwide, by the member of the **Board** of the **Organization, Communication and Public Relations Officer**, Ms. **Helen Carabott**.

Afterwards they had the opportunity to get acquainted with beneficiaries, who have already integrated into Greek society and they are working, as well as to talk with them about the new chapter of their life that they started in **Greece**.

The children, with the help of volunteers, made a collage with the word of **Caritas Athens** logo, **ΑΓΑΠΗ (LOVE)**, and finally, young and old enjoyed a treat.

The **Vice President & Director** of the **Organization**, **fr. Ioannis Patsis**, and the **Operations Director** of the **Refugee Sector**, **Mr. Filippos Salimpas**, as well as **volunteers** and **employees** attended the event.

THE MONUMENT DEDICATED TO MIGRANTS AT ST. PETER'S SQUARE

Pope Francis inaugurated the monument dedicated to the migrants, **"Angels Unaware"** at **St. Peter's Square** on the occasion of the **105th World Day for Migrants and Refugees**, on **September 29**, reminding to everybody the challenge for the Gospel for hospitality, pointing out that "some people, without knowing it, are hosting angels."

It is a bronze and clay sculpture in natural size, designed by **Canadian** artist **Timothy Schmalz**, the first to be placed on the square for **400 years**. It depicts a group of migrants from different races, different cultures and different historical periods, standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder, on a raft while their faces are marked by the drama of escape, danger and an uncertain future. Within this heterogeneous crowd of people, the wings of an angel stand out in the center, as if to indicate the presence of the sanctuary among them!

The **Holy Father**, whose parents were **Italian** immigrants to **Argentina**, has turned the support for migrants and refugees into a central theme of his pastoral discourse. During the inauguration he explained his desire to place the sculpture on **St. Peter's Square**, and on one of the central pillars of the Peristyle, so that it was visible to all, reminding of the evangelical challenge of hospitality.

Finally, in order to remove the white cloth covering the monument, he invited a **4-member family** from **Cameroon**, whom **Pontifical** embraced and kissed.



UCCESS STORIES OF CARITAS ATHENS BENEFICIARIES

The **Social Integration & Livelihoods Program** of **Caritas Athens**, implemented thanks to the donor **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)**, since **July 2017**, with the aim of supporting adult beneficiaries, who are accommodated in its shelters and aiming to their social integration and financial independence, is trying to stand next to several refugees in their first professional steps in our country!



-The **45-year-old K. P.** from **Iran**, who lives in **Greece** with her **9-year-old child**, started working at **FAST SOLUTION & SERVICES** last June, performing supervisory duties and guiding other beneficiaries working at the same employer. The **Greek language courses** that she attended at the **Organization** and her knowledge of English helped her find a full-time job.



-**A. M. A.** from **Syria**, a **36-year-old** father of four, has been working as a kitchen assistant since **August** last year on an 8-hour daily basis at “**THE FISH**” restaurant in Kerameikos area. Previously, he had attended **Greek language courses** at the **Organization** as well as 40 hours of **Vocational Training** at **IEK AKMI** for the specific position.



-**20-year-old H. M. A.**, from **Afghanistan**, has been working on an 8-hour daily basis since **August 2019** on the **CRS Help Line** for the **Prepaid Card Program**. He attended **Greek language courses** at **Caritas Athens**, he speaks very good **English**, and as a **volunteer** he performs computer lessons to farsi speakers at the organization **Social Hackers Academy**.

In the meantime, the **Caritas Athens Urban Accommodation Program**, which is also being implemented with the sponsorship of CRS, hosting more than **800 people** (members of full and single parent families) in buildings and apartments, after a referral from the **UNHCR** and ensures their psychosocial support, social integration and financial assistance, with prepaid cards (to cover their nutrition, mobility and clothing needs), has shown similar results to beneficiaries' success stories:

-The **5-member family** of **B.M.** from **Afghanistan** who has been living in an apartment complex in the capital since **February 2019**, consists of the parents and three minor children. The eldest, **7-year-old A.** is deaf. Until recently the boy could not communicate with his family environment as he had not developed any code. Following the efforts of the **Organization's Social Worker**, Ms. **Efi Thanou**, the child was enrolled at the **Special Primary School for the Deaf** at **Pefki**. The youngster has been integrated into the new environment smoothly and has since developed his social skills significantly. At the same time, the Social Service of the **Urban Accommodation Program** offers **Greek sign language lessons** to both the child and his parents, in order to cultivate communication with each other and to support the little boy by developing his maximum potential at his school environment. At the same time with learning sign language classes, parents are offered consulting sessions on disability issues, with a special focus on deafness.

-Finally, two beneficiaries, a **30-year-old** man from **Afghanistan** and a woman with the same age from **Syria** were selected, trained and began to work professionally as community support workers in a pilot project of the **Association for Regional Development and Mental Health (EPAPSY)** implemented in collaboration with **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**.

17 OCTOBER: INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

STATEMENT OF CARITAS EUROPA

On the occasion of the **International Day** for the **Eradication of Poverty**, on **17th October**, **Caritas Europa** called the **European Commission** to help lift people out of poverty.

In particular, it demanded the soon as possible to be appointed **European Commission** to take action against poverty, inequalities and social exclusion during its mandate. The fact that fighting poverty is a priority in the Political Guidelines for the new Commission is a sign of hope for the more than **112 million** people experiencing **poverty** or social exclusion in **Europe**.

"Now is the time to put words into action" urged **Maria Nyman, Secretary General of Caritas Europa**. Nearly **25 million** of the more than **112.000.000** people living in poverty are children. Due to intergenerational transmission of poverty, the minors who experience poverty at an early age are at a higher risk of growing up to become adults living in poverty.

To end the vicious cycle of poverty, concrete proposals, such as the **European Child Guarantee** which would ensure access to services to all children, sound promising. However, such proposals will only be relevant if sufficient resources are dedicated to them and if they are developed in coherence with existing frameworks, such as the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, the **Agenda 2030** and the **Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular by rebalancing economic, social and ecological objectives in the European Semester process.

Since the **financial and economic crisis** of **2008**, austerity policies have put national social protection systems under pressure, further undermining the capacity of states to protect people against poverty. To respect human dignity, everybody should have the right to such protection. Effective social protection systems contribute to reducing inequalities and to improving social cohesion. The intention of the **Commission** to refocus the **European Semester** into an instrument that integrates the **Sustainable Development Goals** is a promising approach, as is the intention to make full use of the flexibility allowed within the **Stability and Growth Pact**.

However, the participation of people experiencing poverty in policy design is essential in order to develop or improve services that adequately address their needs. **Caritas Europa** is committed to continue facilitating this by involving people in policy processes that affect them directly.

The **EU** can play a decisive role in ensuring that nobody is left behind in **Europe**. The Political Guidelines offer reason to hope that the **EU** will progress towards fair and sustainable social models that keep family policies at the centre, provide for inclusive labour markets and ensure access to adequate social protection systems for all. But these intentions need to be translated into concrete policy initiatives now to ensure that people no longer experience poverty, in a society based on social justice where everybody's dignity is upheld!"

A pioneer in the fight against poverty wins the Nobel Prize in Finance 2019

The **47-year-old Franco-American** professor of **Poverty Alleviation** and **Economic Development** at the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)**, **Esther Duflo**, is the second woman and youngest scientist to be honored with this distinction in the **50 years** since the inception of the **Nobel Prize in Economics**, which is sponsored by the **Swedish Central Bank "Sveriges Riksbank"**!

Her work on the study of poverty and efforts to tackle it, and in particular its distinct methodological bet, which she describes as "creative experimentation", was praised by the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, which decided to share the **Nobel Prize in Economics 2019** with her **Indian** husband, her doctoral professor and co-researcher, **Abhijit Banerjee**, as well as to the **American** economist **Michael Kremer**, for their collaboration on different areas of tackling poverty, "which afflicts about **700 million people**, who are living in extreme poverty, with **nine million children** dying every year before reaching the age of five, from diseases that can be treated," according to the **World Bank**.

She, with her two books "**Knowledge Against Poverty**" and "**The Fight Against Poverty**" (published in Greek by **Polis Publications**), considers her obligation to practice economics "as true social and human science: rigorous, fair, serious, generous, ambitious, militant, fragile and modest. A science of man, with all its richness and complexity! "

According to the experimental approach of the three economists, the problem of poverty can be tackled by breaking down into smaller and more specific questions in areas such as education and health care. By applying field research methods, which are certainly based on theoretical 'readings', they are subject to continuous and rigorous evaluation. When the evaluation is positive, then the theory is verified. When it is negative, the tested theory can be refuted, but the experimental approach is repeated corrected and so on.

It is noteworthy that the highlight of this year's **Nobel Laureate's** career was her selection in **2013** by the **White House** as a former **US President Barack Obama's** development adviser, at which time she took a seat on the **World Development Council**.

H.C.

Source: Omorfi Zoi

SPEECH OF POPE FRANCIS ON HUNGER & FOOD INSECURITY

At the **41st General Assembly of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**, based in **Rome**, **Pope Francis** spoke to about **500 participants**, urging them to co-operate and demonstrate compassion, social and political will to tackle hunger and food insecurity around the world, paying particular attention to the first two goals of **Agenda 2030** for **Sustainable Development**, namely "**zero poverty - zero hunger**"!

The Head of the Catholic Church, welcoming them to the **Vatican** and speaking in Spanish, called for addressing the root causes of the lack of food and access to drinking water. "The lack of food and water, he stressed, is not an internal and exclusive affair of the poorest and most vulnerable countries, but a matter for each of us". "It is everyone's responsibility, either to increase or to relieve the suffering of many of our brothers whose cries of despair we are called to hear," he said.



The Holy Father suggested that "**one way of reducing hunger and food insecurity** is the **reduction of food and water waste**". "This, he said, requires increased awareness of the problem and a greater sense of social responsibility," describing it as a testimony "that the younger generation will pass on to the future ones, so that this social tragedy can no longer be tolerated".

Drawing attention to the obvious link between environmental instability, food insecurity and migratory moves, **Pope Francis** stressed that "**the increasing number of refugees worldwide in recent years shows that the problem of a country is a problem of the whole human family**"

"For this reason, he said, agricultural development should be promoted in the most vulnerable areas, enhancing the resilience and sustainability of the land. This can be achieved on the one hand by investing in technology development and on the other by promoting development policies based on innovation and solidarity".

The Pontiff called on governments, businesses, academic world, civil society institutions and individuals to support and work with the **FAO** and other international organizations to ensure that everyone, especially the poorest, has access to essential goods. In this light, he reaffirmed the **Holy See's** commitment to the global effort to eliminate world hunger and secure a better future for our planet and for all mankind.

Source: cen.gr

THE ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO"

**AN INITIATIVE BY THE HOLY FATHER ON THE ENVIRONMENT & THE ECONOMY
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF NEW ECONOMISTS & ENTREPRENEURS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD**

A three-day meeting dedicated exclusively to **young economists** and **entrepreneurs** from **all over the world** will take place, on the initiative of the **Pontifical**, from **26 to 28 March 2020**, in **Assisi**, with the aim of changing the current financial system in a new form of tomorrow's economy, which will be more equitable and sustainable, without exclusions!



The initiative, entitled "**You Can Change the World**", includes seminars, plenary sessions, workshops and art exhibitions and is aimed to at least **500 postgraduate students** in **economics**, as well as **young entrepreneurs**, who will participate together with **Nobel laureates** and **international celebrities** in one **new global movement** of **economists**, based on the spirit of **St. Francis of Assisi**, with a commitment to meet and collaborate on a regular basis.

The choice of another economy, this of extreme poverty, which was proclaimed by **Saint Francis of Assisi** (1183-1226) and which is presented today as the predominantly **anti-economy**, is symbolic, as the monks of the homonymous Order, who he founded, are considered to be the first economists in Europe. They wrote the first treatises on the economics of the 13th and 14th centuries and opted for absolute poverty, applying the economy of distribution and sharing, which represents an alternative way of understanding science, related to the environment and classifying the poor at the center of its interest.

"This meeting combines **Pope Francis' two priorities: youth** and the **economy**. Instead of focusing solely on heads of state and businessmen, **the Head of the Catholic Church** proposes to the **youth** to work with him to **change the economy**" said **LUMSA Professor of Political Economy** and **Scientific Director** of the **Organizing Committee** (it consists of the Diocese of Assisi, the municipality, the Seraphic Institute of Assisi and the Economia di Comunione) of the meeting, Mr **Luigino Bruni**.

"At the center of the news today is the **Greta Tunberg** movement, which has brought together teenagers from all over the planet, who share their concerns about major environmental issues and the politics of the leaders in charge of the global economy. However, one intermediate link is missing: young people aged **25-35**, who enter the financial world with the prospect of becoming its protagonists, who are, however, excluded from fundamental discussions. Instead, these young people are the link between the **16-year-old Swedish activist** and **political leaders**, and the **Pope** turns to them with an interesting suggestion: to help change this economy, as he believes young people are not the future but the present and are an integral part of the changing process as a driving force. This age group has developed thoughts, especially on environmental and economic issues, far more advanced than those of the elderly, which should be taken seriously. "

Source: SIR Europe

CELEBRATION & HOLY MASS CARITAS PATRON SAINT



On **November 3rd** we commemorate **Saint Martin de Porres**, the patron saint of **Caritas**. The "**Martin of the poor**", is the first black Saint of the **Catholic Church**. He was born in **Lima, Peru's capital** on **December 9th, 1579** and died at the **age of 59**, on **November 3, 1639**, was primarily concerned with the care of the poor and sick and their cure.

His principle on social justice, conveyed by both the **Catholic Church** and its **Caritas Charity**, was the occasion for the presentation of the topic "**Saint Martin de Porres and the Culture of the Meeting**" by the

Caritas Athens Board member & Treasurer, Mr. Stanislaw Stouraitis, at the **plenary meeting of Monday, November 4**, in the hall of the **Archdiocese of Athens**.

The speaker referred to **Pope Francis'** teaching on the mission of the Church, which must be an **outgoing Church** and **meeting** with our fellow human beings who are plagued by various forms of modern poverty.

Following the event which was attended by the members of the **Board, fr. Ioannis Patsis** (Vice President & Director), Ms. **Elizabeth Ioustinianou-Merritt** (Secretary General), Ms. **Helen Carabott** (Communications, Public Relations & Third Age Officer) and Ms. **Nikoleta Delatola**, the **Operations Director**, Mr. **Filippos Salimpas**, and many representatives from the **Parochial Caritas** of the **Diocese of Athens**, a **Holy Mass** was celebrated by **H.E. the Archbishop of the Catholics of Athens and President of Caritas Athens, fr. Sevastianos Rossolatos**, together with the **Vice-President & Director of the Organization, parish priest of St. Paul church, fr. Ioannis Patsis**, the former **Vice President & Director** and **parish priest of St. Luke church, fr. Andreas Voutsinos** and the **parish priest of St. Denis, fr. Georgios Altouvas**.

Saint Martin is also the patron of mixed race, public health workers, those who seek racial harmony, barbers and nurseries.

Prayer to St. Martin de Porres

Lord, through a humble and unknown life
you made St. Martin de Porres
a participant in Your glory,
let us follow his example
to be united with him in the glory of the Saints



TRIBUTE OF SECOURS CATHOLIQUE ON THE ACTIONS OF CARITAS HELLAS & CARITAS ATHENS

The work of **Caritas Hellas**, as well as that of **Caritas Athens**, and in particular the **Micro-Entrepreneurship Program** which **Caritas Athens** is implementing, was presented in an extensive tribute issue of **Secours Catholique (Caritas France)** entitled "**Europe of Solutions. Listing the inevitable and inspiring initiatives of solidarity activists**", along with that of the corresponding **Catholic Church Organizations in Europe**, such as in **Austria, Germany and Spain**.



The aim of the report was to present in depth the actions of **Caritas in Greece**, that intent to alleviate the phenomena of poverty caused by the economic crisis that has plagued the country for the last eleven years.

As mentioned in the preface of the tribute issue entitled "**Greece. Mobilization to overcome the economic crisis and to welcome refugees**", eleven years after the severe economic crisis the country is slowly recovering. Multiple austerity programs have consequences for Greeks: **35% live below the poverty line** and the country is the **European champion in all unemployment categories!** Jobseekers account for 19% of the workforce. This is much lower than in 2014, when the unemployment rate had reached 28%, an unprecedented level. However, the situation is still critical. At the end of **2018, Greece** had a **youth unemployment rate of 39.4%**, the **highest in the European Union**. The country continues to have the same sad record of long-term unemployment, reaching **72.8%** and... rising!

In this context of great instability, the urgent reception of immigrants emerged. **Greece** is the **main gateway for refugees** from the **Middle East** and **Central Asia**, fleeing war zones to reach European shores. Since the rise of arrivals in 2015, the flow has declined, but the country continues to receive thousands of self-exiled people each year under difficult conditions".

Regarding the **Micro-Entrepreneurship Program**, implemented by **Caritas Athens** since **May 2017**, thanks to the sponsorship by **Caritas Andria**, with the aim of providing financial and advisory assistance to young people who wish to start a small business, the tribute issue highlights:

Business plan

"**Elias**, too, came to face unemployment. The **45-year-old jeweler** lost his job and was hopeless about how he could work again: "The goldsmith industry has been hit hard since the start of the financial crisis", he explains. "I had to close my shop and deal with crafts. I worked for a while in a small shop, but the last months there were very difficult as I was never getting paid...".

Being unemployed, he decided to devote his time as a **volunteer** to **Caritas Athens**, where he regularly came to assist in the distribution of clothes to refugees. "Conversing with volunteers and employees, aid was offered to me in order to set up a small Greek enterprise where I could use my skills and sell my creations", he explains.

In a country where the banking sector almost reached the state of bankruptcy and is still fragile, getting a loan is almost impossible. "Small Businesses are a great way of helping young people to

improve their living conditions, to get motivated, to prove that they deserve our trust and that we are not there to exploit them," said **Filippos Salimpas, Operations Director of Caritas Athens**.

As mentioned in the tribute "without limiting itself to financial aid alone, the Organization advises Elias at all stages of the project implementation process: business plan, business search, communication and marketing ..."

Today, he is no longer unemployed. In his shop, which also serves as a workshop, he designs, manufactures and repairs many items: watches, jewelry, wallets, decorations...

"The **crisis remains. Greeks' priority** is to buy **food** and **clothes**. I have to work hard to become known in the market... Even if it's difficult, this store hopes for a better future".



At "**Ilias Art Gifts**" shop at the intersection of **46, Ious** and **Skamvonidon** streets in **Kato Petralona** you can find:

- Handmade jewelry and various other jewelry
- Accessories (scarves, bags, etc.)
- Handmade decorations for the home
- Images & paintings
- Books and wishes boxes
- Seasonal items (eg Christmas ornaments, Easter candles, summer sandals, etc.)

There is also the possibility of ordering any item according to customer's wish.

The shop hosts creative workshops on various techniques for handicrafts, furniture renovations and jewelry repairs.

VISIT OF CARITAS SPAIN EXECUTIVES TO CARITAS ATHENS

A visit to the premises of the **Caritas Athens Refugee Sector**, at **52 Kapodistriou Street**, was held by a team of **Caritas Spain**.

The delegation, consisting of the representative of the **Spanish Holy Synod, fr. Vicente Martin**,



the **Program Officer** of the **Organization for Indonesia** and **Latin America** Mr **Carluccio Giannini** and the **Europe Programs Officer** Ms. **Carmen Gómez de Barreda**, met with the **Vice President & Director** of **Caritas Athens, fr. Ioannis Patsis**, then toured the dining area, the distribution of clothing and food, and in the bathrooms too.

The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the existing cooperation between the three **Mediterranean Organizations** of **Southern Europe (Greece-Italy-Spain)**, to exchange know-how and to promote the

idea of developing the so-called "**Solidarity Tourism**". A program that has been implemented in many overseas countries for many years, with the care of **local Caritas** and is based on cultivating a spirit of volunteerism, respect for the environment and nature, as well as acquainting travelers with culture and social conditions of every place they visit.

CARITAS ATHENS IN MALTA

A meeting with **His Excellency**, the **President** of **Malta**, Mr **George Vella** at the **Presidential Palace**, with the **Minister** for **Foreign Affairs** and **Trade Promotion**, Mr **Carmelo Abela** at the **Ministry** and the attendance of the **Holy Mass** in the **Chapel** of **Curia**, led by the **Honorable Archbishop** of the country, **Monsignor Charles Scicluna** together with the **Honorable Archbishop** of **Athens**, **President** of the **Holy Synod** of the **Catholic Church** in **Greece** and **President** of **Caritas Athens**, fr. **Sevastianos Rossolatos**, and the **St. Paul's parish priest**, **Vice-President & Director** of the **Organization**, fr. **Ioannis Patsis**, was held on **Saturday, October 26**, in **Valletta**, as part of a trip/pilgrimage organized by **Caritas Athens**, entitled "**A Journey through the Steps of the Greek Catholic Ancestors, 1819-2019, two hundred years since the arrival of the first Maltese in Greece (Corfu)**"!



During the **Holy Mass**, which was also attended by the **Foreign Minister** of **Malta**, Mr **Carmelo Abela**, **Malta's Ambassador** in **Greece**, Mr **Joseph Cuschieri**, the **Honorary Consul** of **Malta** in **Corfu**, Mr **Spyros Gaoutsis**, the **Greek Catholic parish priest**, fr. **George Mifsud**, **six Maltese nuns** who lived in **Corfu** for many years and the whole **Caritas Athens** delegation, a 20-member ensemble of the well-known church orchestra and choir, **Cappella Diacono**, sang hymns under the direction of conductor **Raymond Sciberras**.

During the visit of the **Greek delegation** at the **Presidential Palace**, the **President** of the **Republic**, Mr. **Vella**, referred to the importance of maintaining the links between the two countries, lasting 200 years!

At the meeting at the **Ministry** of **Foreign Affairs** and **Trade Promotion**, **Minister Abela**, welcomed the 27 members of the delegation, stressing the government's interest in getting to know and interacting with the **Maltese Diaspora**. Then, the **Honorary Consul** of **Malta** in **Corfu**, Mr. **Spyros Gaoutsis**, presented the history of the Maltese migrants who first arrived on the island and later at **Kefalonia** and other areas of **Greece** during the first half of the 19th century, when the **Ionian Islands** were under the jurisdiction of the **British**, looking for a better future.

The meeting was attended by the **Ambassador** of **Malta** to **Greece**, Mr. **Joseph Cuschieri**, his **Greek** counterpart in **Malta**, Mr. **Dimitrios Tsougas**, the **Greek Archimandrite** Mr. **Nathaniel Felesakis**, as well as senior officials of the **Ministry**.

The **Board** of the **Organization** was represented by the **Vice-President & Director** of **Caritas Athens**, fr. **Ioannis Patsis** and the member Ms. **Helen Carabott**, organizer of the excursion.

Malta is the smallest island state in the **European Union**, in the middle of the Mediterranean, whose name is associated with the Greek word "**honey**".

The island of the Knights, with history back from **5.000 B.C.**, was colonized by the **ancient Greeks**, visited by **Apostle Paul** and, over the years, met many conquerors due to its geographical location, leaving an indelible imprint on its historical, cultural and architectural identity.

Today it is booming, keeping the reins on the **Ship Register** in **Europe**, **seventh** in the world and **first** in **international super yachts**, while being one of the top tourist destinations!

It is worth noting that for this pilgrimage visit by **Caritas Athens** to **Malta**, special emphasis was given by local **media**.

VISIT OF CARITAS ATHENS TO THE EMIGRANTS COMMISSION & TO CARITAS MALTA

A visit to the **Emigrants Commission** and the relevant **Museum**, as well as to the offices of **Caritas Malta**, in Valletta, was carried out by a delegation of **Caritas Athens**, in the framework of the journey/pilgrimage entitled “**A Journey through the Steps of the Greek Catholic Ancestors, 1819-2019, two hundred years since the arrival of the first Maltese in Greece (Corfu)**”!

The **Archbishop of Athens**, **President** of the **Holy Synod** of the **Catholic Church** in **Greece**, and **President** of **Caritas Athens**, **fr. Sevastianos Rossolatos**, the **Vice-President & Director**, **fr. Ioannis Patsis**, the **Board member**, **Ms. Helen Carabott**, the **Honorary Consul** of **Malta** in **Corfu**, **Mr Spyros Gaoutsis**, as well as the excursion participants, had the opportunity to be briefed by the **Director General**, **Mgr. Alfred Vella**, and the **Secretary General** of the **Board of Directors**, **Mr. Charles Buttigieg**, on the important work carried out by the **Organization** (Emigrants Commission) of the **Catholic Church**, which has been operating in Malta since **1950**, to meet its founder and **President**, **Mgr. Philip Calleja**, who recently celebrated his **90th** birthday, to exchange information about the migrant crisis that the two Mediterranean countries face and to visit the Museum site, with information on Maltese migrants all over the world.



Subsequently, a **Caritas Athens** delegation, consisting of the three **Board members**, its members and volunteers, visited the **Caritas Malta** offices in **Curia** for mutual acquaintance and discussion on common issues of concern to the two Organizations.

The presentation of the work of **Caritas Malta**, which celebrated its **50th anniversary** last year, was made by its **Director**, **Mr. Anthony Gatt** and was attended by **fr. Marco Portelli**, **Appointed** by **H.E. the Archbishop** of **Malta** as **Separated Couples Support Sector Officer**, **Mr. André Bonello**, **Head of Community Outreach**, **Ms. Eleanor Borg**, **Community Well Being & Development**, **Ms. Anne Micallef Ciana**, **Head of Counseling**, and **Ms. Geraldine Gatt**, executive.

The work of **Caritas Athens** was presented by **Ms. Helen Carabott**, member of the **Board, Communications & Public Relations Officer**. The two groups had the opportunity to exchange useful information on the migration issue and the related programs implemented by their Organizations, the problems and adversities they face, as well as to exchange symbolic gifts!

CARITAS ATHENS PARTICIPATED IN CARRIER DAYS BY DERECE COLLEGE

Caritas Athens was one of **134 businesses** and **organizations** participating in this year's **44th Career Days 2019** at **Deree College**, which took place **November 18-22** at the **Agia Paraskevi** campus.

For the first time in the multiannual implementation of this successful five-day action, in the context of interconnecting the job market with talented candidates, curated by the **Office of Career Services** of the **American Educational Foundation**, **twelve Non-profit Organizations** were invited, only **one** of them being a **Charity Organization**!

The purpose of the event was to inform the **3,000 students** and **26 programs**, the **three undergraduate schools** (**School of Business**, **School of Liberal Arts and Sciences**, **Frances Rich School of Fine and Performing Arts**), as well as the **6 post graduate programs**, in the fields of **Psychology**, **Communication** and **Education**.

Visitors had the opportunity to meet representatives of leading Greek and multinational companies and gain valuable experience of a short interview on current or future openings, get to know businesses and organizations performing social work and get information on professional opportunities, internship or voluntary employment!

Caritas Athens was represented by the **Board Member, Communication & Public Relations Officer** **Ms. Helen Carabott**, the **psychologist** for the **Shelter Program** **Ms. Maria Kolliopoulou** and the **Senior Social Worker** of the **Shelter Program** **Mr. Giorgos Giouvanakis**, who introduced the **Organization** and its work to many students of **Psychology** and **Social Sciences**.



INTRODUCING THE WORK OF St. PAUL's PAROCHIAL CARITAS



The parish of **St. Paul**, at **23 Filonos Street, Piraeus**, is present for **180 years** (its construction was completed in **December 1839**) is one of the first religious monuments in the city, proving the vibrant Catholic community in the mid-19th century, at the country's largest port.

Along with the three Orthodox churches, the **Cathedral of the Holy Trinity** (completed in 1841-1845 but destroyed during the bombardment of the city by Allied planes, in 1944), **Saint Nicholas** (inaugurated in 1844) and **Saint Spyridon** (built in 1868-1875 on the foundations of the old monastery of the

11th-12th century, which was destroyed in 1835), they are considered to be part of the oldest places of worship built on the sea front.

The original idea of the Reverend **Constantine Sargologos**, general conservator and senior of the parish of Athens to establish a church in Piraeus, was materialized with the help of the first Austrian ambassador to liberated Greece, **Anton Prokesch von Osten**, who was motivated to raise the necessary funds amongst his compatriots.

The first construction plans were made in **1838** by the **German** architect **Eduard Schaubert** (Government technical consultant, based in 19th-century Greece, designing the urban plan of Athens, Piraeus and Eretria). Small scale modifications were later made by **Danish Theophil von Hansen**, with his colleague **C. Lorenzen**, while they were overseeing its construction on a plot of land donated by faithful donors.

The inauguration took place in **1840**, while the **180th anniversary** celebration is scheduled for **Saturday, November 21, 2020**.

The **parochial Caritas** operates under the supervision and guidance of the **parish priest, fr. Ioannis Patsis, Vice President & Director of Caritas Athens** and a group of volunteer parishioners who offer their services in different areas of action.

In the context of social and charity support for our needy fellow human beings, it helps them with financial support and basic necessities, trying to respond to emergencies as they arise, while visiting solitary patients and those in need of love and communication, and organizes meetings open to all ages, in the parish hall and concerts in the Church, for entertainment.



From **Saturday 23 March 2019** the **Listening & Counseling Center** operates with the support of the scientific staff of the **Caritas Athens Help Center** and the coordination of trained volunteers who welcome parishioners, as well as the general public, regardless of religion, ethnicity, nationality facing difficulties and concerns, of a practical, bureaucratic and psychological nature. The coordinators listen carefully to each individual and then undertake to direct them responsibly to the correct service, depending on their request, supporting them during this process.

From St. Paul's Parish

CARITAS ATHENS & THE ASSOCIATION "TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN" DISTRIBUTED PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS TO 112 YOUNG GIRLS

Caritas Athens, in collaboration with the "Together for Children" Association, distributed free annual personal hygiene items to **112 underage girls, aged 12-18**, as part of **Always' #MinEisaiApousa** campaign.

The campaign aims to ensure that no girl, wherever she is, misses school due to a lack of feminine hygiene products.

More specifically, at the offices of the **Refugee Sector**, at 52 Kapodistriou Street, the father or the mother of **52 beneficiary girls** received **seven (7) packages** for every one, while the same activity materialized for **60 young girls** of the **Shelter Program**.



NEW CARITAS ATHENS WEBSITE



The **new updated website** of Caritas Athens (www.caritasathens.gr) has gone online!

Browse the site to get a better idea of its **vision** and **principles**, **activities** related to its **goals**, learn details about its **programs**, news and events, beneficiary success stories, ways to support it, while you can read articles and watch **videos** or **shows** about her **work** and **actions**!

PUBLICATION OF CARITAS ATHENS CALENDAR FOR 2020

The calendar for the new year was published by **Caritas Athens** for the fourth consecutive year.

The detailed leaflet with information and rich photographic material on the activities of the Organization during the past year was created in collaboration with the **eleven Parishes** of the capital and the **Parish of St. Andrew**, in **Patra**.

If you want to acquire it, you can contact **your Parish** or the head office of **Caritas Athens** (9 Omirou street, tel. 210-3626186).



BLOOD DONATIONS



Two new humanitarian actions were organized by **Caritas Athens** with the participation of employees, members, friends, teachers and parents who supported these efforts with great participation!

The **first** voluntary blood donation was held jointly with **Caritas Hellas**, in collaboration with **EKEA**, on **Monday, July 22**, at the **Syntagma Metro station**, and the second on **Saturday, December 14**, in collaboration with the **Greek-French Kindergarten-Elementary School and High School of "Saint Joseph"**, in **Pefki**.

Meanwhile, **Caritas Athens** and **Caritas Hellas** in collaboration with the **National Center of Blood Donation** are organizing together another action on **Monday**, the **13th** and **Tuesday** the **14th** of **January 2020**, from **09:00** to **15:30**, at **Syntagma Metro station**!

The **Caritas Athens' Blood Donation Sector** warmly thanks the sensitized and responsible volunteer blood donors who once again embraced the value of solidarity and altruism and tasted the joy of giving, which is an invaluable value nowadays!

Efi Zaloni

"TURN LOVE INTO ACTION"

CARITAS ATHENS OFFER CAMPAIGN

On the occasion of the Feast of the **All Saints & Departed** on **November 1st** and **2nd**, **Caritas Athens** organized for the ninth consecutive year an offer campaign under the slogan "**Turn Love into Action**", to cover the needs for infant milk powder for the young beneficiaries of the Refugee sector, as well as the needy and sick elderly, who live in the two nursing homes "**Good Samaritan**" and "**Holy Cross**".

The response was great, as **3.780** pieces of **long-lasting milk** (evaporated), **602** pieces of **infant powder**, **35** pieces of **infant powder cream** and **€1,015** for **infant milk powder** were offered! We also raised the amount of **€678** for the **needy elderly** which will be given to the nursing homes of our diocese that host them.

The **Organization** would like to **warmly thank** the **Parishes** as well as the **people** who supported this sensitivity and solidarity initiative, offering comfort and hope to these vulnerable age groups in need!

"GET TO KNOW THE HOUSE - MUSEUM OF ANGELOS & LITO KATAKOUZINOS"

A visit / tour of the **House-Museum of Angelos & Lito Katakouzinou** is organized by **Caritas Athens** on **Saturday 28 December** at **16:00**. The apartment of the artistic couple, on **4, Vasilissis Amalias Avenue**, at **Syntagma Square**, across the street from the **Greek Parliament**, with a magnificent view of the **National Garden** and the **Acropolis**, was a meeting point for scientists, philosophers, writers, poets, artists and politicians. It was one of the most important literary salons of the so-called '30s generation, consisting of a group of intellectuals and artists, born in the early part of the last century and acting as ambassadors of modern Greek culture abroad!

You can apply by order of priority until **Monday 23/12/2019** at **Caritas Athens Secretariat** (9 Omirou Street, Tel: 210 3626186) or at the parochial Caritas.

Price per person: 10 € (entrance & tour included).

THIRD AGE SECTOR

EXCURSION TO PAIANIA FOR THE CUTTING OF NEW YEAR'S CAKE

"Discovering the treasures of the eastern slope of Ymittos"

A visit / tour of the historic **cave of Paiania** also known as **Koutouki** and the **Museum of Contemporary Greek Art & Folk Art of Vorres Foundation**, as well as the cutting of the New Year's cake of the **Third Age Sector** is organized by **Caritas Athens** on **Saturday January 11th, 2020!**

The access / transfer will be done by coach serving the parishes of our ecclesiastical province.

You can access information and application forms at the **Caritas Athens head office** (9 Omirou Street, tel: 210 3626186, between 08.30-14.30) with an advance payment and with closing date Thursday 9/1/2020.

Maximum participation of 54 people. A first come first served basis will be applied.

Price per person: 25 €. It includes transportation, entry and guided tours of the Cave and Museum, coffee and pie in the beautiful area of Ion Vorres' house, as well as lunch with wine or refreshments at the local tavern "Elaionas".

ANNUAL EVENT OF CARITAS ATHENS FOR 2020

Caritas Athens is organizing its annual event on **Sunday 23 February 2020** at **13:00 pm** at the hospitable **NARKISSOS HALL** (52 Agiou Konstantinou St. & Kifissias Avenue, Marousi).

The festive music and dance journey includes an artistic program for all tastes with performers **Takis Biniaris** and **Nana Georgiades** in foreign tunes and songs, rich lunch and drinks, as well as a lottery with special gifts!

You will be able to get invitations from the **parochial Caritas** or the **Organization's headquarters** (9, Omirou street, tel. 210-3626186, daily except Saturdays and Sundays from 09.00-14.30), after mid-January.

Price per person: 25€

Your presence will give us great joy!

"ADMIRABILE SIGNUM"

POPE FRANCIS APPROACH ON THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE

The symbolism of the **Manger**, which is commonly used by **Christians** to place on the base of decorated trees in homes, workplaces, schools, hospitals, prisons, open air markets, squares, etc., is explained in the **Apostolic Letter** by **Pope Francis** entitled "**Admirabile Signum**" on the occasion of his Pilgrimage in the cave of **Greccio**, on **December 1st**, the site of the world's first representation of the **Birth of Godman**!



The **Head** of the **Catholic Church** mentions, inter alia (only a few points of the Letter are cited), the story of the **Manger**, in the beautiful village of central **Italy** (traditionally founded by **Greek settlers**, with the nickname referring to our country, **Grecia**, Grece or **Grecce**, **Greccio**): **Saint Francis of Assisi**, on **November 29, 1224**, after his trip to the **Holy Land**, asked his friend **Giovanni Vellita**, military and lord of the region, for help in fulfilling his wish. To present to the faithful in an experiential way the **Nativity Scene** of **Jesus** in a crib of

Bethlehem lying on the hay among animals. He arranged for everything that was needed, according to the wish of the **Saint**, and on **December 25**, many guests from various parts arrived at **Greccio** bringing flowers and candles to illuminate this sacred night. The people, who took part in the scene of the manger, together with a cow and a donkey, felt a never-ending joy they had never tasted before, while the priest celebrated the Holy Mass with every solemnity, explaining the relationship between the incarnation of the **Son of God** and **Eucharist**!

As the Pontiff states:

- "The **manger** is part of the sweet and demanding process of **transmitting faith**. Starting from childhood and then in every stage of life, it teaches us to think of **Jesus**, to feel God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with Him. And to feel that **happiness** is in it. "

- "**Hay** became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as "**the bread come down from heaven**" (Jn 6:41). Saint Augustine was impressed by this symbolism: "**Laid in a manger, he became our food**" (Sermon 189, 4).

- The **nativity scene** has invited us to "**feel**" and "**touch**" the **poverty** that **God's Son** took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of **humility**, **poverty** and **ill-treatment** that leads from the Manger of Bethlehem to the Cross.

- **Jesus**, "**gentle and humble in heart**" (Mt 11:29), **was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly**. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness.

- **Mary** is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. We see the **Mother of God** who does not keep her **Son** only to herself but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice.

- At **Mary's** side, shown protecting the **Child** and his **Mother**, stands **Joseph**. He is usually depicted with staff in hand or holding up a lamp. **Saint Joseph** plays an important role in the life of **Jesus** and **Mary**. He is the **guardian** who tirelessly protects his family.

- Observing the **star**, those **wise reach men** from the East set out for **Bethlehem**, in order to find **Jesus** and to offer him their gifts of **gold**, **frankincense** and **myrrh**. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honors Jesus' kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity that was to experience death and burial.

- The **construction** of the **manger** in our homes **calls us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy** to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

OSSANA: THE ITALIAN MOUNTAIN VILLAGE WITH THE ...THOUSAND NATIVITY SCENES

Natale: the favorite time of the year for the **Italians**, which is closely linked to the scenes from the **Divine Birth**, in every town and village in the country.

However, a small mountainous picturesque village, **Ossana**, 40 km from **Trento**, the capital of **Trentino**, near the popular tourist destination of **Madonna di Campiglio**, in **northern Italy**, also known as the "**Ossana, il borgo dei 1000 presepi**" has reached a world record as their number exceeds that of its permanent residents (852)!



The Christmas atmosphere is not lacking in the **365 days** of the **year**. The inhabitants are living and working to prepare for the annual representation of the Birth, which takes place from **30 November to 6 January**: they build

buildings, sew or repair clothes and make figures and animals for their tents.

Their number (**890**) increased last year thanks to the donation of a **760-mangers** private collection belonging to a resident of the Veneto region, who loved the village very much and expected its development.

Hundreds of representations are broken down numerically in the streets and the most impressive village houses, such as the **Casa degli Affreschi**, the **Castello di San Michele** and the church of **San Vigilio**. The path from the 12th century Castle to the center of **Ossana** is illuminated by old oil lamps. The courtyards of the houses are filled with light and music, creating an atmosphere that remains engraved forever in the memory of the visitors. On their festive walk, along the path of nearly **1000 representations of Birth**, the visitors can admire galleries of great artists that took many months of preparation. The most representative is the one dedicated, to the **100th anniversary of the end of the First World War**, last year, recalling the **Great War** and an incident of "special peace" in the trenches, on Christmas Eve. This representation is an urge against all wars, so that such a tragedy never happens again!

Each manger stands out for its different character. One of the most impressive ones is the one that is exhibited in a historic home and was presented for the first time three years ago, on the **60th anniversary** (22 December 1956) of the air tragedy at Mount Giner, at a height of 2600 meters.

Also, the manger in the "**House of Frescoes**", which was built **400** years ago, at the spectacular ruins of the local castle. The representation with **Virgin Mary**, **Joseph** and **Jesus** at a typical **dolomite** farm, and more those **Nativity Scenes** with the vibrant colors of South America, where the mother of God is dressed in traditional garments of every place, attract the admiration of the visitors.



Helen Carabott

"HOLY NIGHT"

The most famous Christmas song completed 200+1 years of history



The song "Holy Night" (German "**Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht**") is the world's most famous **Christmas hymn**. It has been translated into more than 300 languages and dialects throughout the world and has been sung by a large number of singers, of any musical genre. **Bing Crosby's** performance, however, has recorded record sales as the third best song of all time. In **2011**, **UNESCO** declared it "**intangible cultural heritage**".

Last year's completion of **two centuries** of **history** was celebrated

with great splendor and various events (exhibitions, concerts, theatrical performances) in his country of origin, **Austria** and especially in the regions of **Salzburg**, **Upper Austria** and **Tyrol**!

"**Holy Night**" was written in the early **19th century** by the **Austrian** primary teacher **Franz Xaver Gruber** (1786-1863, composer) and the young **Catholic priest Josephus Franciscus Mohr** (1792-1848, lyricist). It was first performed on **Christmas Eve** in **1818**, at **St. Nicolas Church**, in the village of **Oberndorf**, 17 kilometers north of **Salzburg**. The lyrics, however, had been written two years earlier, in **1816**, by the abbot mentioned above, as we know from a manuscript discovered in 1995 bearing his signature. On the left side there is the date of writing of the lyrics and in the upper right corner the indication "**Melodie von Franz Xaver Gruber**". Today, it is kept in the **Salzburg Museum** (formerly the **Carolino Augusteum Museum**), where exhibits of the cultural history of this wider region are presented.

For years, its creators have remained unknown and many have attributed the paternity of the song to famous classical composers, such as **Mozart**, **Beethoven** and **Haydn**, or they thought it was a traditional German lullaby.

After his first performance, the song was forgotten as the two creators parted ways, moving to different regions. In **1825**, the then priest of the **Oberndorf church** called the craftsman **Karl Mauracher** to repair the ecclesiastical organ of the temple. He discovered a copy of the song at the back of the organ and he gave it to the **Strasser family**, which had been living in **Tyrol** and used to travel to various German cities singing at festivals. Thus, "**Holy Night**" began to spread to the German-speaking countries and soon became very popular. In **1839**, the **Rainer family** of musicians from the same region presented the song in **New York**, beginning the spread of the "**Holy Night**" in the English-speaking world.

In **1863**, it was translated into English by **John Freeman Young** (1820-1885), with a slightly different melody from the original. In **1840** it was first published under the title "unknown composer". It was the favorite song of King Frederick William IV of Prussia, who had commissioned a search to find its creators!

"**Holy Night**" is considered extremely popular in both the **Catholic** and **Protestant churches**. In **World War I**, it was sung simultaneously in **English** and **German** by the fighting troops at the front, during the **Christmas 1914 truce**!

H.C.

STATISTICS FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE & FAR EAST

On the occasion of **Pope Francis'** pastoral visit to **Asia (Thailand and Japan)** last **November**, and to the **United Arab Emirates** last **February**, the **Holy See's** statistical office provided data on the **Catholic communities** there:



- In **Thailand**, **Catholic believers** number **400.000**, with a population of **69.691.436**! 16 bishops, 523 priests and 311 friars serve in 11 church provinces, working in 502 parishes and 566 other pastoral centers. The lay catechists reach 1900. Priests or monks/sisters run 253 primary, 163 secondary and 10 tertiary educational structures, as well as 4 hospital structures and 8 laboratories.

- In **Japan**, out of the **126.710.746** inhabitants, indigenous **Catholics** are estimated to be around **550.000**, while many more faithful come from the **Philippines** and other **Southeast Asian countries** and **Latin America**, mainly **Brazil**!

The country, which attracted many missionaries to carry the evangelical message, since the time of **St. Francis Xavier** (470 years ago), has been divided into **3 Dioceses (Tokyo, Nagasaki and Osaka)** and 16 ecclesiastical provinces in total. It provides 29 bishops, 511 priests, 896 friars and 12 permanent deacons and has 859 parishes and 102 other pastoral centers. There are about 1300 catechists. The Church has an important role in education and health. It manages 575 primary, 188 secondary and 57 tertiary educational structures, as well as 29 hospital structures and 10 laboratories.

- In the **United Arab Emirates**, the **Catholics**, immigrants from dozens of countries, mainly from India and the Philippines, exceed **900.000** people! That is **9.8%** of the population in a country of **9.230.000** inhabitants!

At the top of the local church is the **Apostolic Vicar**, of Swiss origin. The clergy priests are 11, in 6 parishes. There are still 57 friars who serve 15 pastoral centers. A simple monk, a permanent deacon, and 3 seminarians fill in the picture, while the nuns are 43. Respectively, the popular catechists reach 1.535 people.

In the field of education, the **Catholic Church** runs 20 first-grade institutions, with 16.727 students and 7 second-grade institutions, with 4.156 students.

In China and Mongolia

In the meantime, the **Holy See-China** interim agreement on formal recognition by both sides of all **Catholic communities**, their **priests** and **church leaders** is implemented slowly but firmly (it must be remembered that in **China** the "**patriotic Catholic Church**" recognized by the **CCC** and the "**Church of catacombs**" faithful in **Rome** existed for decades). Problems have arisen, especially after protests, by thousands of **Hong Kong** citizens with the **Beijing**-controlled local government. Many **Catholic organizations** are taking part in the protests, but their calls for a peaceful resolution of the dispute have been welcomed by the Chinese government.

In this context, last **August**, the **new Bishop** of **Jining**, **H.E. Anthony Yao Shun** was inaugurated, succeeding **Bishop John Liu Shigong**, who passed away in 2017, at the age of 90, in the presence of four of his colleagues and hundreds of clergies.

The ordination of the **first Catholic Bishop** of, controlled by **China, Mongolia**, was the unanimous proposal of the Diocese's representatives, which was accepted by both **Vatican** and local state authorities following the **Rome-Beijing** agreement. The **54-year-old**, responsible for **70.000 Catholics** in the region, specializes in **Liturgy**, due to relevant studies in the **Philippines** and the **USA**. He had previously studied at the **Beijing Seminary**, where he was a spiritual counselor for young students.

Source: D.I.E.

CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS PRESIDENT BAPTIZED 450 STREET CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES



The mystery of Baptism for **450 children** living on the streets was given by **Caritas Internationalis President Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle**, who celebrated the Holy Mass together with ten priests at the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in the Philippines capital on **Saturday, September 28!**

These homeless children grow up in the wider area of the capital, **Manila**, under the auspices of the **Tulay ng Kabataan (TNK)**, a **Catholic Church Foundation**, which strives to provide lost dignity to minors and adults alike by offering meals, social housing, and social integration programs.

Each year its volunteers welcome about **1.500 children in 36 Centers**, while over the past **21 years** it has supported more than 55.000 children who survive under difficult conditions.

It must be noted that on **December 8, Pope Francis** appointed the **62-year-old Cardinal** as head of the **Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**, which coordinates this important work, as well as missionary action around the world.

In a move to approach **Asia**, where two-thirds of the world's population live, the **Head of the Catholic Church**, who recently visited **Thailand** and **Japan** and plans to travel to other countries in the **Far East** during **2020**, has been assigned duties to the **Archbishop of Manila**, who becomes the second **Asian** to take up the post (the **Indian Cardinal** and **Holy See diplomat, Ivan Dias**, served in that position from 2006 to 2011).

PRAYER WITH ELECTRONIC ROSARY



Following an innovative web app, "**Click to Pray**", through which the **Catholic Church's** faithful have been able to pray with **Pope Francis** in **six languages** since last January, the **Vatican** is pioneering again, presenting after nine months the ... **electronic rosary!**

The device, called "**Click to Pray-eRosary**", consists of ten black agate and hematite beads and a cross that stores data, connects to an application on the user's mobile phone, can be worn manually and activated by blowing the air sign of the cross.

When activated, the user can use the rosary for a simple, thoughtful, or thematic prayer that is renewed. The device shows the progress of the prayer and maintains details of each completed one.

The **electronic rosary** is part of the "**Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**" and is designed as a "prayer for peace in the world" learning tool. The app that comes with has settings for personalizing the religious content, health tracking and more. Its sale price is **99€**.

Source: www.zougla.gr