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The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

29 June 2020 AD

No. 14 (Summertime)

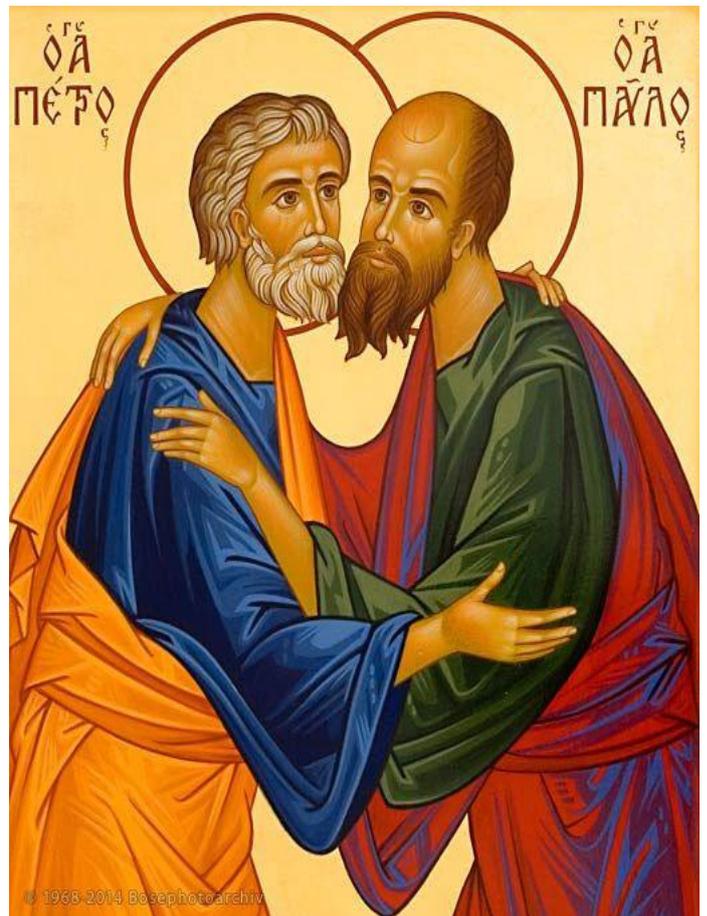
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THE PILLARS OF THE CHURCH

On June 29, we celebrate the solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the two “pillars” of the Church. Two guys very different from each other. The preface of today’s Mass thus outlines the traits of each of them: “Peter, foremost in confessing the faith; Paul, its outstanding preacher; Peter, who established the early Church from the remnant of Israel; Paul, master and teacher of the Gentiles that you call.” But the discrepancy between the two Apostles is much more radical: Peter was a poor fisherman from Galilee; Paul, an intellectual born in the diaspora and brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of the Pharisees. Peter was one of the first disciples of Jesus; Paul instead was called when Jesus had already been glorified. Even their personal character was significantly different: generous and impulsive, but fearful Peter; resolute, steadfast and fearless Paul. Well, these two so different men were both chosen by God as pillars of his Church—with different gifts and different missions. Paul sketches the contrast in these terms: “He who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles.” (Gal 2:8) Endowed with different charisms, they built up and served the one Church. It would be useless to wonder which of the two is more important: the Church needs both of them. The Church is not only a society structured with hierarchical organs, but also the Mystical Body of Christ; she is not only a visible assembly, but also a spiritual community. In other words, the one Church, besides her institutional appearance, possesses a charismatic nature, too. Well, if Peter is the leader of the former, Paul is the “prophet” of the latter.

Even for us, the two Apostles are both important. Our Mission is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See. It is not yet a Diocese with a Bishop as its own shepherd. Though the Ecclesiastical Superior is the Local Ordinary, his power of governance is not ‘proper’ but just

‘vicarious,’ that is to say, he governs the Mission in the name of the Supreme Pontiff—the Successor of Peter. On the other hand, the Mission was entrusted since its beginning to the Clerics Regular of St. Paul—Barnabites. So, we can consider the two Apostles as our Patron Saints and pray to them for our spiritual growth. Even in our case, the two Apostles look inseparable. 



ST. JOHN PAUL II AND AFGHANISTAN

Last May 18 was the centennial of the birth of Karol Wojtyła, the pope-to-be John Paul II. The Holy Pontiff always felt deep love for Afghanistan, and his love was sincerely returned by the Afghans. So, we think that it can be useful to review quickly the different aspects of this special bond between the Pope of the Catholic Church and a remote Muslim country of Asia.

The first memory that occurs to me is the audience granted by Pope Wojtyła to the Barnabites for the 450th anniversary of their foundation, on November 26, 1983. More than 8,000 people packed the Paul VI Audience Hall, in the main, students of the Barnabites' schools. On the stage, at the Pope's side, the Superior General of the Order along with other personalities. The audience began with the address of Father General, who introduced to the Pontiff the various groups present. Father General's address was interrupted by the applause of each group. When Father General mentioned Fr. Angelo Panigati as the only catholic priest residing in Afghanistan, it was the Pope himself that interrupted Father General and asked Fr. Panigati to come closer to embrace him.

Some days later, Pope Wojtyła invited Fr. Panigati to concelebrate with him in his private chapel and persuaded him to stay for breakfast.

In his *Urbi et Orbi* Message on Christmas Day, 2001, the Holy Pontiff said: "In [Jesus] we can recognize the face of every little child who is born, of whatever race or nation: the little Palestinian and the little Israeli; the little American and *the little Afghan*; the child of the Hutu and the child of the Tutsi... whoever the child is, to Christ each one is special. Today my thoughts go to all the children of the world: so many, too many are the children condemned from birth to suffer through no fault of their own the effects of cruel conflicts. Let us save the children, in order to save the hope of humanity!" This appeal inspired the late Guanellian Fr. Giancarlo Pravettoni to work out the 'PBK (*Pro Bambini di Kabul*) Project,' which was realized in 2004, with the constitution of the 'PBK Association,' and in 2006, with the opening of the 'PBK Day Center for children with non-serious mental disabilities' in Kabul.

In 2002, John Paul II called a 'Day of Prayer for Peace in the World,' to be held in Assisi on January 24. There were present representatives of all Christian Churches and Communities, leaders of other religions, civil authorities, bishops and cardinals. Among the 'guests' (17 in all) he wanted two Barnabites also to be there: Fr. Angelo Panigati and Fr. Giuseppe Moretti, who had succeeded him in 1990.

In the same year, the Italian Embassy was reopened after the Taliban period. The Holy See asked the Barnabites to take on the Chaplaincy again. But the Pope wanted to upgrade that presence. So, on May 16, the Mission *sui juris* was established.

When, in 2005, John Paul II died, great was the emotion in Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai attended the funeral in St. Peter's Square. The ministers of the Afghan Government and the Diplomatic Corps were present at the commemoration held in the Chapel of the Italian Embassy on April 8.

At the entrance of the same Chapel remains as a memento an engraving of the Pope on black marble. In the living room of the Rectory is kept an exquisite oil portrait by the Afghan painter Fulad Anzurgar (*photo*). In the garden in front of the Rectory a stone commemorates the late Pontiff with these words that we wholeheartedly endorse:

"In remembrance of His Holiness
Pope JOHN PAUL II
22 October 1978 – 2 April 2005
Protege nos semper, Pater Sancte"
(= Protect us always, Holy Father!)

Giovanni Scalese, CRSP



LATEST NEWS

EASTER CANDLE

Due to the Covid lockdown, nobody was able to enjoy it, but during the Easter Vigil the Candle was blessed that was donated by Graf MICHAEL VON MAGNIS from Berlin, Germany, who was for some time Military Advisor at UNAMA. The Candle remained beside the ambo throughout Eastertide until Pentecost; now it is kept in the little chapel of O. L. of Divine Providence. Many thanks to Michael for his wonderful gift!



AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE

Mr. ROBERTO CANTONE, after four years spent as Head of Mission at the Italian Embassy in Kabul, was appointed Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh. He left on May 31, along with Ms. TANIA ABDO MEHANNA. We want to thank Mr. Cantone for the special attention he always showed toward the Chapel and the Catholic Mission. We wish him all the best in his new assignment.



EASTER MASS

On Easter Day, April 12, the Holy Mass was celebrated for the personnel of the Embassy in the garden of the Ambassador's Residence, in full obedience to the anti-Covid measures.

A VISIT FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC

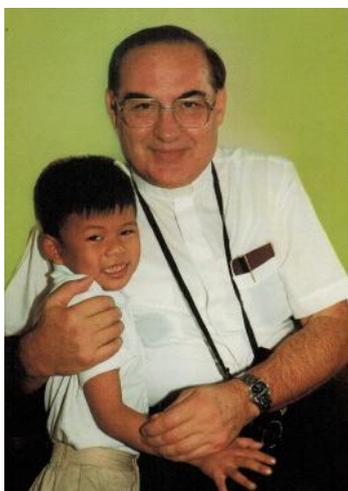
On June 11, a pleasant meeting took place at the Rectory: the *Chargé d'affaires* of the Czech Republic, FILIP VURM paid a visit to Father John, to hand over a donation from the Bubeneč Parish in Prague (see *Nasara*, no. 12). In that Parish, run by Fr. MILOŠ SZABO, during the month of January, the faithful had prayed for Afghanistan and made a collection for the poor of our Mission. The fruit of the collection had been entrusted to the Czech Diplomats in Afghanistan, but up to now it had not been possible to arrange the meeting, because of the pandemic. In the photo, Mr. Vurm gives Father John a bottle of wine produced by the Parish: "Gothard (after the Patron Saint of the Parish, St. Gotthard) Rulandské bílé (= *Pinot blanc*)." Many thanks to Fr. Miloš and his parishioners for their generosity. *May God bless all of you!*



COVID-19 UPDATE

No news yet about the end of the lockdown and the resumption of public liturgical celebrations in our church. Unfortunately, the health situation in Afghanistan and the spread of positive cases even within the international community do not allow, for the time being, the loosening of the precautionary measures adopted. As soon as the situation changes, you will be informed. In the meantime, you are all invited to pray individually or in groups, availing yourselves of the help of the media and offering this trial in reparation for our sins and those of the whole world.

OBITUARY



On last Ash Wednesday, February 26, the Rt. Rev. Fr. GIUSEPPE BASSOTTI passed away in Moncalieri (where he was born), at the age of 85. He had been the Superior General of the Barnabites from 1982 to 1994. During his generalate the Congregation had a significant expansion: it was he that established new foundations in Poland and in the Philippines. He always had also a great concern for Afghanistan: in the almost 90 years of the Barnabites' presence in this country, he has been the only Superior General who visited the Mission. Between the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984, accompanied by Fr. Giuseppe Moretti, he made his 'canonical visitation' to the Kabul religious house. We entrust him to the prayers of parishioners, friends and benefactors. May he rest in peace!

NOTICE

This newsletter is sent to all the parishioners—past and present—friends and benefactors of the Mission. Whoever, for any reason, does not like to receive it, can obviously request to be removed from the mailing list. Italians say: "Friends like before," friends all the same.

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Ecclesiastical Superior & Editor of Newsletter :
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The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistansis*) is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See, covering the whole territory of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a "particular church"—that is to say, a portion of the people of God—likened to a Diocese (Can. 368). By the law itself, it possesses juridical personality (Can. 373). It was established by the Holy See on the 16th of May, 2002 and entrusted to the care of the ORDER OF CLERICS REGULAR OF SAINT PAUL—BARNABITES (CRSP). It is presided by an Ecclesiastical Superior (*Superior ecclesiasticus*), who acts as the Local Ordinary (Can. 134 §2).