

Nasara

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The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

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ET ERIT ISTE PAX

The Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah usually associate his coming with the establishment of peace. In this connection, the oracles of the prophet Isaiah are renowned: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again” (2:4); “Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair” (11:6-8).

But there is another prophet, contemporary of Isaiah, who connects the Messiah with peace, Micah. He does it in the oracle quoted by the evangelist Matthew: “And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel!” (Mi 5:1; Mt 2:6). The oracle goes on: “He shall take his place as shepherd by the strength of the Lord ... and they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth: he shall be peace (ET ERIT ISTE PAX)” (Mi 5:3-4a).

Saint Paul, drawing inspiration from this text and applying it to the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, says: “He [= Christ] is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility ... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace” (Eph 2:14-15).

That is what we celebrate at Christmas: the birth of the “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:5), who comes to bring peace to the world; the birth of the One who is Peace himself. We would like to share this belief with our Afghan friends. We would like to see the peace, that our Savior is bringing to us, flourish even in this country. After so many years, observers are cautiously optimistic about the talks under way in Doha between US and the Taliban. Someone goes so far as to envisage an agreement by the end of the year. We wish it were so! It would be the best Christmas present. We do not cease to pray that this may happen.



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

LATEST NEWS

SR. GRASIANA'S VISIT

From October 4 to November 1, during Sr. Teresia's annual leave, Sr. GRASIANA ROBERT SILAYO, MC was in Kabul, to keep Sr. Irene company and help her in her work at the PBK Center. She is from Tanzania and belongs to the Consolata Missionary Sisters, the same Congregation to which Sr. Irene belongs. *Thank you, Sr. Grasiانا, for being and praying with us! Please remember us in your prayers and... come again!*



Sr. Grasiانا (right) with Sr. Irene

GENERAL CAMPOREALE'S FAREWELL

After one year of service as Deputy Commander of the *Resolute Support Mission* (DCOM-RS) and Italian Senior Representative (ITA-SNR), Lt. Gen. SALVATORE CAMPOREALE went back to Italy. Before leaving, he was so kind as to pay us a visit, to bid us farewell. On Sunday, November 3, he attended Mass in our church along with his closest aides. At the end of the Mass, he wanted to leave to the church a souvenir of his stay in Afghanistan, a beautiful statue of *St. George on horseback killing the dragon*. It will be kept in the chapel of Our Lady of Divine Providence



Gen. Camporeale presents Fr. John with St. George

(which is also a memorial shrine for the Italian fallen), along with the mementos left by his predecessors: *St. Michael* (Lt. Gen. ROSARIO CASTELLANO, 2017); *O. L. of Loreto* (Maj. Gen. ANTONIO BETTELLI, 2018); *Cappello Alpino* (Maj. Gen. MASSIMO PANIZZI, 2019). *Many thanks to Gen. Camporeale for the friendliness showed toward our community! To him our best wishes for the future!*

ROTATION AT THE TOP OF "PROPAGANDA FIDE"

On December 8, Pope Francis appointed the Filipino Cardinal LUIS ANTONIO TAGLE as new Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (a.k.a. *Propaganda Fide*), on which our Mission depends. Up to now, he was Archbishop of Manila (2011-2019), after being Bishop of Imus (2002-2011). Father John had him as his Bishop, from 2003 to



Fr. John with then Bishop Tagle in Tagaytay (2005)

2009, when he was Rector of the Saint Paul Scholasticate in Tagaytay. His predecessor Card. FERNANDO FILONI was named by the Pope as Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher. While we thank Card. Filoni for the concern he has always showed for our Mission, we wish Card. Tagle all the best for his new job. *May God bless them both!*



SR. SHAHNAZ'S ARRIVAL

On November 28, a new Sister arrived in Kabul, to swell the ranks of the PBK Community. It is Sr. SHAHNAZ CHRISTINE BHATTI, SDC, 44 years old. A Pakistani national, she belongs to the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne-Antide Thouret. After studying in Rome philosophy and theology, she served the Lord in different countries. Lately, she held an important position, that of Secretary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Islamabad, the papal diplomat on whom even our Mission depends. Now her Superiors have assigned her to a totally different job, with the special children of the PBK Center. Whether in a Nunciature or in a special school, all opportunities are good for serving the Lord. *Welcome among us, Sr. Shahnaz!*

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

In the Apostles' Creed, after confessing "the Holy Catholic Church," we profess our faith in "the communion of saints." The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, after explaining the first meaning of this expression—"the common sharing of all the members of the Church in holy things (sancta)" [#194]—expounds its second meaning: "This expression also refers to the communion between holy persons (sancti); that is, between those who by grace are united to the dead and risen Christ. Some are pilgrims on the earth; others, having passed from this life, are undergoing purification and are helped also by our prayers. Others already enjoy the glory of God and intercede for us. All of these together form in Christ one family, the Church, to the praise and glory of the Trinity." [#195]

Usually, we emphasize the last two aspects—the communion with the "suffering Church" (= the blessed souls in purgatory) and that with the "heavenly Church" (= the saints in paradise). We do it especially on the first two days of November. But we are often led to forget that the communion of saints unites, first and foremost, all the believers who are still pilgrims on the earth. Christian life can be compared with a pilgrimage, to be sure, but not an individual pilgrimage—we are reaching God as a people, helping one another.

A good example of this spiritual communion within the Church is the nice initiative of the Bubeneč Parish, Prague, in the Czech Republic. Last October, the Parish Priest, Father MILOŠ SZABO, sent us the following message:

We are a Roman Catholic parish in the Prague district of Bubeneč, which is home to many states' diplomatic missions in the Czech Republic. This fact has inspired us to attempt to spiritually connect the countries of the world. While representatives of countries work together on various levels to facilitate co-operation and ensure that mankind lives in peace and safety, we have decided to support this work through prayer. Every month, we are going to pray for one specific country and her inhabitants regardless of their religion.

As part of this project, we wish to introduce the given country to our parishioners through informational boards, one concerned with the general facts about the country, the other describing the religious situation with an emphasis on the presence and activities of the Roman Catholic Church. On the first Monday of the given month at 5:30 p.m., there will be a Mass, whereafter we will have an evening programme about the given country with a discussion, which will last approximately one hour.

On Monday, the 6th of January 2020, we are going to be concerning ourselves with Afghanistan and—for the duration of the entire month thereafter—we are going to continue to pray for both the country and the Catholics therein. For that reason, we would be hon-



Fr. Miloš Szabo, J.C.L., S.Th.D., Parish Priest

oured to have your support and your blessing for this event. We would be greatly honoured if you could find time to consider greeting our parishioners in writing or any other form you find suitable; we will be happy to read your greeting to them and publish it in our monthly newsletter.

On December 15, Father John replied with the following letter:

Very Reverend Father, I wish herewith to congratulate You and Your Parish Community on the initiative of praying monthly for a different country of the world. It is a well-deserving initiative, that does You credit and shows the catholicity of the Church.

I have learned that on next January 6 You will pray for Afghanistan. You could not have chosen a better date, both because Epiphany is the missionary feast par excellence, and above all because, according to tradition, the Magi left precisely from these regions to go and adore the King of the universe. It is here that the Magi saw the star which led them to Bethlehem and now appears on the coat of arms of the Mission (designed in Slovakia).

I ask You to pray for our small Christian Community, made up only of foreigners who sojourn in Afghanistan to help this unfortunate country. In particular, pray for the Sisters who more permanently live in Kabul to serve the poorest of the poor. And then pray for all the Afghans, victims of a never-ending war: pray that this country may as soon as possible recover a modicum of peace, concord and serenity that allows an economic and human development in justice and freedom.

Thank You for Your closeness and Your prayers. We too, on January 6, will pray for You. May the Lord reward Your charity. I bless You.

The latest Catholic chaplains at HQ-RS come from the Czech Republic: Fr. Tomáš Mlýnek, Fr. Petr Fiala, Fr. Petr Šabaka and Fr. Kamil Vícha. Now a Czech parish is praying for Afghanistan. It is nice to see how the Holy Spirit is working in the Church, to make of us "one body, one spirit in Christ" (*Eucharistic Prayer III*).
g.s.



The Church of St. Gotthard at Bubeneč, Prague

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 24, Tuesday: CHRISTMAS EVE

5:00 p.m. Christmas Novena – Announcement of the Lord's Nativity ("Kalenda Proclamation")
Lightening of the fifth candle of the Advent Wreath
Unveiling of the Infant Jesus
5:30 p.m. Vigil Mass (*in place of the Night Mass*)
Blessing of the Nativity Scene

December 25, Wednesday: CHRISTMAS DAY

5:30 p.m. Solemn Christmas Day Mass
Apostolic Blessing (*Plenary Indulgence*)

December 29, Sunday: HOLY FAMILY

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

December 31, Tuesday: LAST DAY OF THE YEAR

5:30 p.m. Anticipated Mass of the Holy Mother of God – Chant of the TE DEUM (*Plenary Indulgence*)

January 1, Wednesday: HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (it's a holyday of obligation!)

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass
Chant of the VENI CREATOR (*Plenary Indulgence*)

January 4, Saturday (First Sat. of the Month)

5:00 p.m. Holy Rosary
5:30 p.m. Anticipated Sunday Mass

January 5, Sunday: SECOND AFTER CHRISTMAS

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass on the Vigil of the Epiphany

January 6, Monday: EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (it's a holyday of obligation!)

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass – Announcement of Easter
Adoration of the Infant Jesus

January 12, Sunday: BAPTISM OF THE LORD

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass – End of Christmastide

THE MISSION'S NEW IBAN

Following the adhesion of the Vatican City State on March 1, 2019 to the *Single Euro Payments Area* (SEPA), the *Institute for Works of Religion* (IOR), the Vatican bank, initiated a process of technical, regulatory and procedural adjustment to SEPA platform that has now been completed. So, starting from October 1, 2019, money transfers between the IOR and other banks have become easier. Each account has been given an *International Bank Account Number* (IBAN), which will allow the customers to receive money transfers in a simple and quick way.

So, from now on, those who want to support the Mission can make a transfer using the IBAN you find in the nearby box, one for transfers in Euros and one for transfers in US Dollars. If the transfer is made from Europe (*SEPA Credit Transfer*, in Euros), it is enough to specify the IBAN number and the beneficiary name (*Barnabiti–Missio sui juris Afghanistan*). If the transfer is made from outside Europe (*SWIFT Payment*, possibly in Dollars), besides the IBAN, it is necessary to add the BIC code of the bank (*Istituto per le Opere di Religione*).

We remind you that every month, on the first Friday of the month, a Holy Mass is celebrated for the Mission's benefactors and their intentions.

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The Roman Catholic
MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN
رسالت کاتولیک افغانستان
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The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistaniensis*) 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).