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CONTENTS

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ASSISI : VIDEOS - Arrival in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer for Peace - YouTube

CHINA : Beijing issues new, harsh draft regulations on religious activities By Bernardo Cervellera

COMMENTARY : Breaking down the wall by Jeroom Heyndrickx

GLOBAL : "Development depends upon peace" Cardinal Parolin

ROME : Pope cracks down on cash payments in miracle approval process by Christopher Lamb

ROME : Pope warns journalists not to use their trade as a weapon - The Tablet

U. K. : Scholars call for end to church ban on artificial contraception by Sarah Mac Donald

ASSISI : VIDEOS - Arrival in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer for Peace - 2016.09.20 (YouTube via CNUA)

> > https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymE9RzZLkh8&feature=em-subts_digest

CHINA : Beijing issues new, harsh draft regulations on religious activities By **Bernardo Cervellera, Rome** (AsiaNews via CNUA) A new set of draft regulations on religious activity has been issued in China. These would replace [the 2004 regulations](#). Compared to these, the draft is longer: there are 74 articles spread over nine chapters, (in 2004 there were only 48 articles). New to this draft is the inclusion of norms for the construction of religious buildings and statues (after the demolition campaign of crosses and churches); diverse rules governing the use of the internet; clarifications on Buddhist religious personnel (Tibetan) as well as Catholic. The amount of fines that are imposed on those who break the rules has also been adjusted. Now there will be penalties of up to 200 thousand yuan (over 27 thousand euro: the minimum wage in Shanghai is a bit less than 300 Euros) for "illegal religious activities " or foreign travel and pilgrimages without government consent.

Contradictions within the Party In itself, the draft, published on September 8 on the State Council for Legislative Affairs website, was made public to allow for any corrections, suggestions and amendments until October 7. But a Party member confessed laconically to *AsiaNews*: "It is said that it is a draft, but it really is the definitive text." The ideological structure of the new text remains firmly in the communist domain: religious activities, to be expressed, must be screened and controlled by the state at all levels; village, county, state, country.

Without defining what a religion is or religious experience, the regulations (Art. 2) begin proclaiming that in China "citizens enjoy religious freedom", that no one "can force a person to believe or not to believe "and that" ... no organization can discriminate against citizens who believe in a religion".

This statement is in contradiction to what is happening within the Chinese Communist Party itself, where for years it has been preached that [members can not adhere to any religion](#) even in private, not even after they retire.

Although there is no definition of religion, the first part of the draft lists a long series of things that religions "must not do": cause conflict with other religions or non-believers; provoke ethnic divisions; favor religious extremism; divide the nation; practice terrorism (art. 4).

"Sinicized" religions without foreigners - To be "under the law", religions must be "guided" by the government of the people, by the departments of Religious Affairs, the county and village authorities who have the right to intervene in religious activities (art. 6). In addition, each religious group "must adhere to the principle of independence and self-government" and "not be controlled by foreign forces" (art. 5). These principles are a tradition from the times of Mao Zedong, who at first wanted to destroy religion and then - when this proved impossible - at least control them with an iron fist with the patriotic associations, giving rise to "independent" churches and community. But these principles have taken on a new emphasis after [President Xi Jinping's speech to the United Front last year](#), in which he warned against "foreign influences" and decreed that if the religions want to live in China they must "sinicize ". The negative psychosis operated on foreign religions refers to Muslims in Xinjiang and Tibetan Buddhists, but also the Pope and the Vatican who, with the appointment of bishops, are suspected of conspiracy and of "interference in China's internal affairs". This "sinicization" also deals a blow to foreign personnel who may be invited to "religious schools" (seminaries, monasteries, etc.). Art. 17 provides that institutions cannot invite staff from abroad, and that permission can only be

granted by the " State Council Department of Religious Affairs". This fruits of this can already be seen: theological seminaries such as Beijing, which once housed dozens of foreign professors, now can barely obtain permission for two or three.

The places of worship and crosses - A complicated process has been introduced for the approval of the construction of places of worship, with applications passing month to month through all levels of government; only then can a place of worship be built, but then it will take even more months to apply for registration for use (Articles 19-27). Special permits are required to install religious statues outside of places of worship (Art. 29-30). In addition to permission, the religious community must accept the verification of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In any case "the construction of large religious statues outside of temples and churches is prohibited". The ban reflects the demolition campaign carried out against the crosses and churches in Zhejiang launched two years ago to reduce the visibility of the Christian buildings, which hoisted large crosses on top of buildings or towers. In addition to destroying buildings that had already received building permits, the provincial **government issued norms which regulated the height, position, size and even the color of the crosses.**

Controlling the buddha and bishops - Chap. V (arts. 36-39) regards "religious personnel", who exercise ministry. They must be registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. There are two specific points. The first refers to the "living Buddha" of Tibetan Buddhism, whose reincarnation "must be submitted for approval to the department for religious affairs of the people's government". The **Party-government established this rule years ago, which seeks to prevent the possibility of an "uncontrolled" or "not approved" reincarnation the Dalai Lama.**

Another specific point regards Catholic bishops, who must be registered with the nation's departments of religious. It is also specified that "those that have not obtained or have lost religious professional credentials, must not engage in activity as religious professionals" (n. 36). Many Catholics are concerned that this subparagraph might harden the government's stance towards unofficial bishops, who are not registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and that therefore commit "illegal or outlawed actions" if they dare to celebrate a Mass or distribute the Sacraments.

The end of the underground community? The same can be deduced from the Chap. VII on "legal responsibility", where "illegal" religious activities will be punished "according to law" and result in a revocation of "the registration certificate." Many Chinese dioceses have been signaling to us that the government is licit and illicit means to push unofficial priests to register with the Ministry. Sadly – although not specifically mentioned in the Regulations - such registration occurs through the Patriotic Association (PA), which is the control body, whose statutes (to build an "independent" Church) are "incompatible with Catholic doctrine" , as the Letter of Benedict XVI to Chinese Catholics clearly states. Most underground priests would be willing to be registered if the tentacles of the PA were removed. The fact remains that these new regulations appear to deal a lethal blow to the underground community, making it almost impossible for them to exercise their religious freedom without registration of places of worship and staff. What's more their "illegal activities" could result in hefty fines up to 200 thousand yuan (Arts. 67-68).

The "criminal" actions that warrant severe punishment include " accepting domination by external forces, accepting clergy from foreign religious groups or organizations without authorization, as well as other acts contrary to the principle religious independence and self-governance" (art. 70, 2). In practice, if out of friendship an Italian priest celebrates with a

community or with a Chinese priest ("without authorization"!) he will be committing one of the most serious crimes: ecclesial communion does not count; it must have government approval.

The criminalization against everything that harms "independence and self-government" has also spread to the internet: religious information via the internet must have the permission of government authorities and "must not contain prohibited content" (Arts. 47-48) .

In conclusion, reading all regulations, religions emerge as a suspect and dangerous item, made acceptable only if controlled by the "people's government". Yet from the start Regulations proclaim that "religious freedom" is enjoyed by all citizens, without discrimination.

Among the discriminatory prohibitions there is in fact - in addition to the abovementioned prohibition on Party members to be religious - the fact that "It is prohibited to proselytize, hold religious activities, establish religious organizations, or set up religious activity sites in State schools" (art. 44). In return, the state has the right to coerce and to enforce lessons of atheism and Marxism in religious schools. > > > <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beijing-issues-new,-harsh-draft-regulations-on-religious-activities-38660.html>

COMMENTARY : Breaking down the wall by Jeroom Heyndrickx

Pope Francis' appointment of Pietro Parolin as his Cardinal Secretary of State has seen an encouraging improvement in Sino-Vatican relations. But diplomacy is still proving tricky

Relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Vatican are more positive and hopeful today than they have been since the Communist Government broke off relations with the Holy See in 1951. The intervening 65 years have been particularly dark. Thousands of missionaries were expelled in the aftermath of the severing of ties, and, during the 1965-75 Cultural Revolution, bishops and priests were condemned to prison and labour camps. "Freedom of Religious Belief" was reintroduced under leader Deng Xiaoping in 1982 but the absence of a law of religion still causes conflicts, especially with the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 pastoral letter to the Catholic Church in China pleaded for reconciliation within the Church and with the Government.

The reason for improved relations is due to a different approach to the Chinese developed by Pope Francis and his diplomats. When he became Pope in 2013, Francis immediately appointed Cardinal Pietro Parolin as Secretary of State: a clear signal that normalising the situation of the Church in China would be high on his agenda. Parolin was the ideal person to direct this project. As Secretary for Relations with States in the Secretariat of State, he had re-established direct contact with Beijing in 2005. Then, in 2009, he brought a Vatican delegation to Beijing and negotiated a draft for an agreement on the appointment of bishops. Ever since then, he has been highly appreciated by the top diplomats in the PRC.

But soon after Benedict XVI moved Parolin to Venezuela as nuncio. The draft was never signed because of the complexity of the issues and because of different views existing at the time both within the Vatican and within the Chinese Government. The PRC was so upset about this failure that, in 2010, it appointed and ordained some illegal bishops. By 2011, the Vatican had excommunicated three of these, thereby complicating any future attempt to

normalise the situation of the Church in China.

The style of Francis pleased China from the moment he became Pope. Hope for new initiatives to improve Sino-Vatican relations grew inside and outside China and Pope Francis did not lose any time. Starting in March 2013, the very month he was elected, he sent friendly messages to President Xi Jinping on several occasions. These cleared the road towards a first round of negotiations, which revolved around questions of Church and secular authority, with a team from the PRC that went to Rome in June 2014. But they failed. Both the Vatican and Beijing were deeply disappointed. It was a lesson for both parties. Rome is learning that, in China, for 2,000 years the emperor was also "pope". He decided on everything, including religious matters. And China is learning that every religion has its own dogmas and rules that it wants to keep for reasons that are hard for an atheistic country to understand.

The promising aspect in the Sino-Vatican dialogue, however, is that both sides see the need for, and the advantage in, making the dialogue succeed. Rome urgently wants to normalise the situation of Catholics in China and the PRC needs to polish its international image on human rights and religion. Improving relations with the Vatican will help. The session in 2014 failed but was important in that both sides discovered the resolve of the other side to stick to its principles, and that the list of issues on the agenda was enormous and complex.

To the fore is China's wish to take over the last embassy of Taiwan in Europe, namely the one in the Vatican, while the Holy See can hardly abandon Taipei with a stroke of the pen. And this is by no means the most difficult issue to be resolved. That, undoubtedly, is the status of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), set up by the Chinese Government in 1957 to make the Catholic Church in China independent from Rome, and the related issue of the appointment of bishops.

The creation of the CCPA divided the Church internally. One group that became known as the "unofficial" (or "underground") community refused to cooperate with the PRC Government. Another group accommodated itself to the Government while remaining faithful to the Pope, by this means trying to save the Chinese Catholic Church. They became known as the "official" ("patriotic") community.

While this means there are two internally opposed communities inside the one Catholic Church in China, there never was a "schism". There is only one Church, internally divided in two communities, which both openly confess their unity with the universal Church and the Pope.

In the current negotiations, one can hardly believe that the Communist Government will abolish the CCPA as many are requesting. In fact, the existence of a Catholic association encouraging the faithful to love their country is in itself a good thing. There is no reason why the CCPA could not continue under the guidance of the bishops but on condition that they refrain from stating in their statutes that the goal of the association is to make the Church in China "independent". Unity of local Churches with the universal Catholic Church and the Pope is part of Catholic faith. One could still continue to speak of a local Church that was "autonomous" in the relative sense that any other local Church with a nationally-based bishops' conference is autonomous. Only if China requested the Chinese Catholic Church to be independent from Rome would this mean that freedom of religion is not allowed for Catholics in China.

The issue is crucial, yet too complex at the moment to be solved in a few rounds of negotiations. Other issues need to be addressed first. These issues pertain to the

appointment of bishops. Thirty unofficial (“underground”) bishops appointed by the Pope are still awaiting recognition by the Chinese Government. Eight official bishops were appointed by the state and await recognition by Rome; but three of them were excommunicated by Rome. Bishop Su Zhiming of Baoding diocese has been in prison for decades. Bishop Ma Daqing of Shanghai is under house arrest while his diocese – its seminary, printing press and so on – has been paralysed for 10 years.

In two other dioceses, Rome had appointed a “bishop in charge” but the Government also appointed one. Which of the two will be recognised? Each of these issues has its own particular background, complicating the search for a solution.

What is happening in Wenzhou Diocese where the old Bishop, Zhu Weifang, died and where the successor, Shao Zhuming, (appointed by Rome but illegal for the PRC) was abducted last week by the police, is again unclear. Will the PRC accept Shao as successor? Or is this “abduction”, as some suggested, a way to gain time so that Rome and the PRC can agree on another candidate? Again, what does the PRC mean when it speaks of “sinicising” the Catholic Church, as Yu Zhengsheng, one of seven standing committee members of the Politburo, did on 7 September, the same day that the Government released a draft bill to amend the Regulation for Religious Affairs? The draft bill does not propose reining back on government control over religions.

In October 2015, a team of six went from the Vatican to Beijing for another round of negotiations. Their visit to the tomb of Matteo Ricci SJ, one of the founding figures of the Jesuit China missions, and their meetings with the Bishop of Beijing as well as the (for Rome) illegal bishops, Ma Yinglin and Guo Jincai, both members of the (for Rome) illegal Chinese bishops’ conference, was seen as a positive signal. New hope grew. Three months later, in January this year, Beijing negotiators went again to Rome and in April the Vatican team went to Beijing. After that, it became known that a “working group” would continue the negotiations. It seemed as if an agreement on the appointment of bishops would be signed in a few weeks or months. But by today – September – this has not happened.

Did negotiators on both sides underestimate the legal complexity of some of the situations mentioned above? Or did both Beijing and Rome have to deal with opposing opinions within their own camps? Perhaps both are true.

Church people feel confused. Facing so many issues, Pope Francis and his negotiators are guided by a healthy realism, and discussion of the appointment of bishops receives priority. Bishops inside China – several official bishops as well as unofficial bishops – have openly supported him in his attempt to negotiate agreements. Achieving these would be a major step towards setting up a legal Chinese Bishops’ Conference, recognised by Rome and by the PRC and including all the bishops – official as well as unofficial. This would be a historic achievement, but it presupposes reconciliation and that does not happen overnight.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, some Catholics have openly disagreed with the dialogue initiated by Pope Francis. This could have a negative impact on some unofficial bishops inside China, causing them to hesitate to join in one bishops’ conference along with the official bishops. And, in any case, is the PRC ready to allow unofficial bishops to join?

But we have been given reasons to be hopeful. On 31 July, Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong wrote a historic letter stating that negotiations are going in a positive direction and calling on the faithful to rally behind Pope Francis in this historic dialogue in order to end the long stalemate. Moreover, Cardinal Parolin, in an interview in *Avvenire* on 24 August, said that the negotiations are going on “with the spirit of good will on both sides. It is a matter

of finding realistic solutions for the good of all”.

In this Holy Year of Mercy, perhaps Pope Francis will achieve what he courageously set out to do: to make a big step forward towards normalising the situation of the Catholic Church in China. But the heavy agenda of the negotiations and the long list of complex issues to be dealt with that has grown over the past 60 years warns us not to be naïve by simplifying the issues.

Fr Jeroom Heyndrickx CICM is the founder of the Taiwan Pastoral Institute and founding director of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, Leuven Catholic University, Belgium. > >
><http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/8968/breaking-down-the-wall>

GLOBAL : "Development depends upon peace" Cardinal Parolin

(Vatican Radio via CNUA) The Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, on Thursday delivered an address for the opening of the Seventy-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly. In his remarks, Cardinal Parolin said "Integral human development is...impossible without peace." "Conflicts not only render the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level absolutely impossible, but also destroy so many human resources, means of production and cultural heritage," – the Cardinal said – "Today, as during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, there is the recurrence of the threat of nuclear conflict with its terrible consequences. The enormous and ill-fated effect of war is a downward spiral from which there is often no escape, triggers an increase in political polarization at the global level and narrows the spaces in which the same international community can propose effective solutions for a stable and lasting peace."

ADDRESS by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin Secretary of State of His Holiness Pope Francis and Head of the Holy See Delegation to the General Debate of the Seventy-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly New York, 22 September 2016

Mr President, Last year, in his address in this Hall, His Holiness Pope Francis defined the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as "an important sign of hope." Just a few days ago, he reiterated his appreciation for the actions taken last year by the United Nations, encouraging all to put these ambitious objectives into practice:
"The protection of our common home requires a growing global political consensus. Along these lines, I am gratified that in September 2015 the nations of the world adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, and that, in December 2015, they approved the Paris Agreement on climate change, which set the demanding yet fundamental goal of halting the rise of the global temperature. Now governments are obliged to honour the commitments they made, while businesses must also responsibly do their part. It is up to citizens to insist that this happen, and indeed to advocate for even more ambitious goals."

The achievement of the 2030 Agenda involves an important assumption of responsibility on the part of Governments and the commitment of all for the common good. This commitment entails recognizing the need to strive not only for great macroeconomic goals but for outcomes that are specific, lasting, and equitably distributed. Without a stable financial situation, lasting investments and a commercial appraisal that favours internal growth, however, the 2030 Agenda will be impossible to

achieve. Pope Francis has emphasized that “economics and politics, society and culture cannot be dominated by thinking only of the short-term and immediate financial or electoral gains. Instead, they urgently need to be redirected to the common good, which includes sustainability and care for creation. One concrete case is the ‘ecological debt’ between the global north and south. Repaying it would require treating the environments of poorer nations with care and providing the financial resources and technical assistance needed to help them deal with climate change and promote sustainable development.”

We always must remember that development – especially integral human development – cannot be imposed. Men and women, as individuals, must be the principal agents of the 2030 Agenda. Last year, in this very chamber, Pope Francis affirmed that this “pre-supposes and requires the right to education, ... which is ensured first and foremost by respecting and reinforcing the primary right of the family to educate its children, as well as the right of churches and social groups to support and assist families in the education of their children.”

Therefore, Pope Francis continued, “the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new Agenda for development will be the effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water, religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education.”

Such a process of bringing about integral human development – a concept that includes, but is not exhausted by, economic development – should, through multilateral initiatives, stimulate also the quest for complementary, alternative finance systems capable of ensuring that financial resources are both accessible to and sustainable for the poorest. As Pope Francis said here last year, “The pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life,” which presumes that “we recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, one that includes the natural difference between man and woman (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 155), and absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions.”

Integral human development is, moreover, impossible without peace. Only two days ago in Assisi, Pope Francis, together with numerous other world religious leaders, stressed the importance of dialogue as a privileged way to be peacemakers. Conflicts not only render the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level absolutely impossible, but also destroy so many human resources, means of production and cultural heritage. Today, as during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, there is the recurrence of the threat of nuclear conflict with its terrible consequences. The enormous and ill-fated effect of war is a downward spiral from which there is often no escape, triggers an increase in political polarization at the global level and narrows the spaces in which the same international community can propose effective solutions for a stable and lasting peace.

Among the factors that degrade social coexistence in countries and undermine the whole international community, we must count the scourge of terrorism. In the course of recent years, we have seen the metastasis of terrorism to so many parts of the world. Neighbors to Syria and Iraq have increasingly become victims of innumerable barbaric acts. Beyond the Middle East, atrocious acts of terrorism have instilled fear in the daily life of so many across the globe.

In the Middle East, we see the terrible consequences of a spiral of war: many lives destroyed; fallen states; collapsed ceasefires; unsuccessful peace initiatives; and failed attempts to resolve the fundamental causes of conflict in Syria, Iraq and Libya, to find a solution to the crisis of the presidency in Lebanon, and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This persistent failure has dampened the hopes and promises of all who consider that region sacred and holy. We can also witness these failures in the long-standing conflicts that continue to oppress and take the lives of so many in South Sudan, the Great Lakes, and now for two and half years in Eastern Ukraine. Although these situations have all been high profile and have brought an immense amount of human suffering, we are still very far from resolving their root causes. It almost seems that we have accepted conflict, war and terrorism as part of our new normal.

Beyond the urgency of the need for ceasefires, for respect for the dignity and the rights of affected peoples, and for access to humanitarian aid, there is also the necessity to facilitate negotiation with those who have direct or indirect responsibility for particular conflicts. Thankful for the positive outcome in Colombia, the heartfelt hope of the Holy See is that, through the facilitation of the international community, various forms of contact and dialogue will be pursued to resolve ongoing conflicts.

In particular, from the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Holy See has invited all Parties to dialogue and the international community to spare no efforts in facilitating an end to violence and in promoting the conditions for dialogue aimed at finding a political solution. Syria, however, has been overrun by all kinds of armed groups. The uproar of arms must cease so that peace may stand a chance, and above all so that humanitarian assistance may be brought to those who most need it. The Holy See is convinced that this is possible provided that there is the political will to bring an end to the fighting.

Despite present difficulties, one can still gratefully find in Lebanon the conviction that the common good requires the participation and cooperation of all sectors of society, based on the rule of law and the idea that institutions are founded on respect for the innate dignity of every human being. The Lebanese constitutional arrangement, in which diverse ethnic groups, cultures and religions are an asset and contribute to a peaceful coexistence, can also be a model for a political solution in the region.

The Holy See also believes that in the Middle East a renewed commitment in favour of the rule of law and of freedom of religion and of conscience is the most effective way to safeguard the dignity of all. In this context, the 2015 Global Agreement that the Holy See signed with Palestine and that has subsequently been ratified by both Parties sets out in law the defence of the most basic human rights, among which are freedom of religion, the right to peaceful assembly, and the freedom publicly to profess one's own religious beliefs. In the complex situation of the Middle East, and in particular in Iraq and Syria, the Holy See maintains that the Global Agreement with Palestine can serve as a template for other Countries with analogous social structuring.

In the context of renewed efforts to relaunch the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, the Holy See renews its appeal to both Parties to abstain from unilateral or illegal measures of whatever kind, which may constitute an obstacle to the search for peace and to the advancing of the two-State Solution.

When we look at the phenomenon of forced migration, we find ourselves before a population of people on the move greater than that of many of the States represented here: sixty-five million people have been compelled to flee from their homes and communities, because of persecution, conflict, widespread violence and hunger, and devastated lands. A word of praise must go to Lebanon and to Jordan for the hospitality they are offering to all who have escaped from war and destruction in Iraq and Syria as well as to Turkey, which is hosting millions of Syrian refugees.

Beyond the necessary urgent consideration of how to resolve the causes of this forced exodus, we must note that migration and development are tightly linked. The consequences of the mass movement of refugees and migrants threaten to weaken our commitment to the values of solidarity and hospitality towards those in need. These values stand at the heart of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy to which Pope Francis has been summoning the world. As Pope Francis has emphasized, "Mercy is the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life," especially those who are the weakest and most vulnerable.

Drawing special attention to those who are in prison, the Pope has renewed his pressing appeal "to the consciences of leaders, that they come to an international consensus aimed at abolishing the death penalty." Without authentic and absolute respect for life, there can be no development that is truly human, integral and sustainable. Precisely to foster this development, Pope Francis has instituted a new Dicastery or department of the Holy See, the purpose of which is to promote justice, peace, the safeguarding of the environment, and the care of those most in need. The poor and needy are the human face of the sustainable development that we wish to keep ever before us, so that we may become responsible agents of a more just and truly human society. Thank you.

> >

> http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/09/23/cardinal_parolin_to_un_development_depends_upon_peace/1260244

ROME : Pope cracks down on cash payments in miracle approval process
23 September 2016 | **by Christopher Lamb in Rome (The Tablet via CNUA)**

Pope Francis today announced a toughening up of the miracle approval process for potential saints, ruling that a near unanimous agreement of medical experts was needed and that they cannot be paid for their services in cash. The latest changes, announced by the Vatican today, state that five out of seven - or four out of six - medical experts must agree that a miraculous cure has taken place while a possible one cannot be assessed more than three times.

Remuneration for the medical advisers, the rules added, should be made only by bank transfer, in an attempt to bring more transparency to the saint-making process which, according to some estimates, costs as much as €500,000. The banning of cash payments came on the same day the Holy See announced it had signed the United Nations convention against corruption designed to clamp down on bribery, embezzlement and money laundering, in what is another sign of the Pope's determination to clean up the Vatican.

The process to declare someone a saint has been subject to controversy recently with leaked documents in the latest Vatileaks scandal revealing that millions of euros involved in canonisation causes had been left unaccounted for.

In his book based on leaked Holy See documents, Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi revealed that a commission set up in 2013 by Pope Francis froze the accounts of almost everyone involved in the work of choosing saints including one postulator who had more than €1 million spread out among three Vatican bank accounts.

But today Paloma Ovejero, the Deputy Director of the Vatican Press Office, told journalists that medical experts will be paid a total of €3,760 which works out as just over €500 each for their work in assessing a potentially miraculous cure. Before the group meet two experts undertake preparatory work looking at a case and submit a report. And the president of the group examining the cures can only serve two five-year terms of office.

Catholic reformers have also raised questions about the need for two miracles to be approved by the Vatican in order to declare an individual a saint, with many feeling it unnecessary and theologically dubious. Countering such views, Archbishop Marcello Bartolucci, the secretary of the Vatican's saint making department, stressed that the miracles of saints are the "finger of God" and ratify "the human judgment of their holiness."

He stressed, however, that the process for approving miracles must be robust. "It is necessary that their study is carried out with serenity, objectivity and competence on the part of highly skilled medical experts," he wrote in an article in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano published today.

An approval of a miracle by medical experts is only one step on the road to sainthood: cures also need to be approved by a panel of theologians and the Pope himself. It has been known for popes to block a cause where a miracle has earlier been approved. And while the new regulations are sign of greater transparency, they continue to demand the traditional requirement of secrecy for all those involved in assessing miracles.

> > > <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/6167/0/pope-cracks-down-on-cash-payments-in-miracle-approval-process>

ROME : Pope warns journalists not to use their trade as a weapon
22 September 2016 | by Christopher Lamb (The Tablet via CNUA)

The Pope warned against peddling rumour and speculation that can harm others

Journalism can become a form of "terrorism" when it peddles false rumours about people, Pope Francis said today warning reporters not to use their trade as a "weapon of destruction".

Francis told Italian journalists at a Vatican gathering they had a vital role in writing the "first draft of history" and accepted that this sometimes involves criticism and the "denunciation of evil". But their task, he stressed, came with a great responsibility. "An article published today and tomorrow will be replaced by another, but the life of a person unjustly maligned may be destroyed forever," the Pope said. Rumours, he explained, are like a form of

terrorism as language can "kill" someone - this reiterates remarks he has made in the past, such as when he described gossip as a "terrorist bomb" with words.

Francis said journalism should build up the common good of society but in order to do so journalists must not feed fears about issues such as migrants forced to flee their countries due to war and hunger. "Of course criticism is legitimate, as well as the denunciation of evil, but it must always be done while respecting 'the other'", Francis said. "I hope that more and more journalism is a constructive tool that builds the common good - and an accelerator of reconciliation."

The Pope gave journalists three things to focus on in order to do their job well: to love the truth, embody professionalism and respect human dignity. During the speech Francis talked about the overhaul of Vatican communications with the establishment of a new secretariat. This body, he said addressing the journalists, "will be the natural point of reference for your valuable work".

Today the Pope published the new statutes governing the department which is bringing together all of the different Vatican media outlets and is being led by Mgr Dario Viganò. It also takes in the Holy See Press Office, whose recently appointed director is the former Fox News journalist Greg Burke. The secretariat was established after a commission, led by former Chairman of the BBC Trust Lord (Chris) Patten, put forward proposals to the Pope on how to improve Vatican communications. > >

> <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/6164/0/pope-warns-journalists-not-to-use-their-trade-as-a-weapon->

U. K. Scholars call for end to church ban on artificial contraception 22 September 2016 | [by Sarah Mac Donald \(The Tablet via CNUA\)](#) More than 100 international experts on biology, ethics and theology have called for an end to the Church's ban on artificial contraceptives for family planning, in advance of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. The report on the ethical use of contraceptives is the product of a year-long collaboration which included a number of UK-based academics. One of the report's main findings is that the responsible use of contraceptives fits within the moral framework of the Catholic faith. The report was launched this week at a "Keeping the Faith in Development" symposium in New York by Dr Luca Badini-Confalonieri, the lead author and research director of the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, an international network of reform-minded Catholics. The summary statement has been signed by more than 100 prominent Catholic scholars from around the world, including the former president of Ireland, Dr Mary McAleese. The report calls for an update to church teaching on contraception to make it compatible with current scientific and theological knowledge, and an official re-opening of the discussion on the morality of using contraceptives. The best way to do this, say the academics, is through an independent process of consultation similar to the commission on women deacons that Pope Francis recently announced. Speaking to The Tablet, Miriam Duignan of the Wijngaards Institute said the ban on modern contraception can harm marriage and family life by burdening couples with more children than they can care for and, therefore, subject them to a life of poverty, stress and sickness. The signatories say they believe the world's 1.2 billion Catholics are ready for a development of doctrine. Supporting the initiative, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, patron of the Wijngaards Institute, said, "The Church has to recognise the reality of people's lives. The gulf between practice and teaching is too great and causes serious anxiety to many people." It is contradictory to affirm, on the one hand, that as a general principle "sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive [is] intrinsically wrong", and on the other that it is morally legitimate to practise natural family planning with the "intention to avoid

children”, the report finds.

All co-authors agreed that abortifacient drugs should be avoided, unless there is proportionate reason for doing otherwise. In addition to its main findings, the report also calls for the Vatican to make public an as yet unpublished 2006 document by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, which states barrier methods of contraception can be morally legitimate for prophylactic (disease-preventing) purposes.

> > > <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/6158/0/scholars-call-for-end-to-church-ban-on-artificial-contraception>

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**For All That was *Thank You Lord*. For All That Is Going To Be *Yes Lord Amen*.
My Lord, My God, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done, Come Lord Jesus
Christ. Amen.**

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