

Our Faith on Sunday

GOSPEL REFLECTION



consent Mary's divine motherhood would have hit a wall. By nature, he seems to have been a kind man for in order not to put Mary to shame he was going to quietly send her away. But something more than kindness was required of him when the angel told him to take Mary as his wife. He required faith, the same faith that is required of

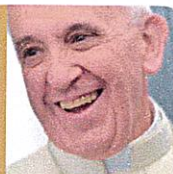
to say, "My Lord and my God" (Jn 20,28). Let this be our request this Christmas: that we receive the grace which allows us to recognise in that tiny baby of the nativity scene the axis around which the whole of human history turns, the light which has come into world to dispel every darkness. Pope St Paul VI said: "We consider Christmas as the encounter, the great encounter, the historical encounter, the decisive encounter, between God and mankind. He who has faith knows this truly; let him rejoice." Yes, let us rejoice.



To those who knew him, Joseph the carpenter, husband of Mary probably didn't evoke much notice or comment. He was what we could call an ordinary man. And yet, he has a key role to play in the cosmic drama of salvation. Without his

all of us when presented with the astounding mystery of God taking on human form and being born of a virgin. It also requires grace, the same grace that allowed Peter to say to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Mt. 16,16) and Thomas

POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL
FRATELLI TUTTI
BROTHERS AND SISTERS ALL



Pope Francis'
Encyclical Letter
DILEXIT NOS

THE DEATH PENALTY

263. There is yet another way to eliminate others, one aimed not at countries but at individuals. It is the death penalty. Saint John Paul II stated clearly and firmly that the death penalty is inadequate from a moral standpoint and no longer necessary from that of penal justice.²⁴⁶ There can be no stepping back from this position. Today we state clearly that "the death penalty is inadmissible"²⁴⁷ and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), 56; AAS 87 (1995), 463-464.
²⁴⁷ Address on the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (11 October 2017): AAS 109 (2017), 1196. ²⁴⁸ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter to the Bishops Regarding the Revision of No. 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Death Penalty (1 August 2018): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 3 August 2018, p. 8.

We cannot attain our fulfilment as human beings unless we open our hearts to others; only through love do we become fully ourselves. The deepest part of us, created for love, will fulfil God's plan only if we learn to love. And the heart is the symbol of that love. The eternal Son of God, in his utter transcendence, chose to love each of us with a human heart. His human emotions became the sacrament of that infinite and endless love. His heart, then, is not merely a symbol for some disembodied spiritual truth. In gazing upon the Lord's heart, we contemplate a physical reality, his human flesh, which enables him to possess genuine human emotions and feelings, like ourselves, albeit fully transformed by his divine love. Our devotion must ascend to the infinite love of the Person of the Son of God, yet we need to keep in mind that his divine love is inseparable from his human love.

