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CNS documentary service

An Interview With Pope Francis

Austen Ivereigh

The COVID-19 quarantines, lockdowns and stay-at-home orders are the perfect opportunity for conversion: for individuals, for the church and for governments, Pope Francis said in an interview. "What we are living now is a place of 'metanoia' (conversion), and we have the chance to begin," Pope Francis said. "So, let's not let it slip from us, and let's move ahead." The pandemic crisis is an opportunity to reflect on how people use their time and resources, how the church responds to new pastoral needs, how society has allowed the economy to be the first consideration when making decisions about people's lives and how governments still spend billions on weapons when they cannot provide adequate health care to all their people, the pope said

"My major concern — at least what comes through my prayer — is how to accompany and be closer to the people of God."

in the interview first published April 8 in the U.S. magazine *Commonweal* and the British journal *The Tablet*. Austen Ivereigh, an author and journalist, submitted written questions to Pope Francis; the pope sent an audio recording of his responses April 3. Asked how he is living the lockdown, the pope responded, "I'm praying more, because I feel I should," and he is trying to focus on the needs of other people because "it takes me out of my self-preoccupation." Pope Francis said, "It's a time for inventing, for creativity." The church needs creativity, too, he said. It needs to learn to live with and value the "disorder" that comes from the Holy Spirit raising up new charisms and calling people to find new ways to live and share the Gospel and, at the same time, to recognize the "harmony" the Spirit creates in bringing believers into communion with each other in the church. Ivereigh's translation of the interview, which was conducted in Spanish, follows.

toward the end of March I suggested to Pope Francis that this might be a good moment to address the English-speaking world: The pandemic that had so affected Italy and Spain was now reaching the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Without promising anything, he asked me to send some questions. I picked six themes, each one with a series of questions he could answer or not as he saw fit. A week later, I received a communication that he had recorded some reflections in response to the questions. The

continued on page 754

2249A



contents

- 753 An Interview With Pope Francis
by Austen Ivereigh
- 757 Easter Message *Urbi et Orbi*
by Pope Francis
- 759 Easter Vigil Homily
by Pope Francis
- 760 Universal Basic Wage Should be Considered
by Pope Francis
- 761 Easter Mass Homily
by Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond
- 763 A Message of Hope and Solidarity Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic
by Sister Mary Haddad, RSM, and Sister Donna Markham, OP
- 764 Good Friday Homily
by Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap
- 765 Easter Vigil Homily
by Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa
- 767 Good Friday Homily
by Archbishop José H. Gomez
- 768 Datebook
- 768 On File

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