

**WBC TOPICS**

**January 2016 Meeting**

* **Welcome and Self-Introductions**
* **Woodstock Business Conference Mission Statement**
	+ **The Mission of the Woodstock Business Conference is to establish and lead a national and international network of business executives to explore their respective religious traditions in order to assist the individual executives:**
		- **To integrate faith, family and professional life,**
		- **To develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values and**
		- **To exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large**
	+ **The Conference, grounded in the Roman Catholic tradition, welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another’s religious tradition. It is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one’s religious heritage.**
* **Scripture Reading: In the Year of Mercy: Colossians 3: 12-17 The Practice of Virtues**
* **Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all of these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ’s peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through him.**
* **Quiet Reflection 5 minutes followed by sharing insights**

**1st Readings: This reading suggested by Richard Kunnert from our Rockford, Illinois Group**

 Here is Francis speaking to inmates in Isernia Prison.

[PASTORAL VISIT TO THE DIOCESES OF CAMPOBASSO-BOIANO AND ISERNIA-VENAFRO](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2014/inside/documents/papa-francesco-molise-2014.html)

**MEETING WITH THE DETAINEES**

***ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS***

*Local penitentiary (Isernia) Saturday, 5 July 2014*

**Video**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good afternoon,*

I thank you for your welcome. And I thank you for your witness of hope, which I heard in the words of your representative. Even in the Governor’s greeting this word struck me: hope. This is the challenge, as I was saying two weeks ago at the prison of Castrovillari: the challenge is social reintegration. And for this, you need an itinerary, a route, whether outside, in the prison, in society, whether inside oneself, in the conscience and in the heart.

To make the journey of reintegration, which all of us must do. Everyone. All of us make mistakes in life. And all of us must ask forgiveness for these mistakes and undertake the journey of reintegration, in order not to make any more. Some make this journey at home, in their own work; others, like you, in a penitentiary. But everyone, everyone.... Whoever says he does not need to make a journey of reintegration is a liar! All of us make mistakes in life and all of us, too, are sinners. And when we go to ask the Lord for forgiveness for our sins, for our mistakes, He always forgives us, He never tires of forgiving. He tells us: “Turn your back on this path, this is not the right one for you”. And He helps us. And this is reintegration, the journey that we all have to make.

What is important is not to stand still. We all know that when water stands still it stagnates. There’s a saying in Spanish that says: “Standing water is the first to go bad”. Do not stand still. We all have to walk, to take a step every day, with the Lord’s help. God is Father, he is mercy, he always loves us. If we seek Him, He welcomes us and forgives us. As I said, He never tires of forgiving. This is the motto of this visit: “God doesn’t tire of forgiving”. He makes us rise and fully restores our dignity. God has a memory, He is not forgetful. God does not forget us, He always remembers. There is a passage in the Bible, from the prophet Isaiah, which says: Even should a mother forget her child — which is impossible — I will never forget you (cf. Is 49:15). And this is true: God thinks about me, God remembers me. I am in God’s memory.

And with this trust, we can walk, day by day. And with this steadfast love which accompanies us, hope will not let us down. With this love hope will never let us down: a steadfast love to go forward with the Lord. Some consider taking a path of punishment, of misdeeds, of sins and just to suffer, suffer, suffer.... It is true, it is true we suffer. As your fellow inmate said, here you suffer. There is suffering inside and also outside, when one sees that one’s own conscience is tainted, sullied, one wants to change it. That suffering which purifies, that fire which purifies gold, is a hope-filled suffering. There is a beautiful thing, when the Lord forgives us he doesn’t say: “I forgive you, get on with it!”. No, He forgives us, he takes us by the hand and he helps us to go forward on this journey of reintegration, in our own personal life and also in social life. He does this with all of us. To think that punishment alone corrects the inner order of a person only through “beating” — I don’t know if it’s said like this — that it is corrected only by punishment, this is not God, this is mistaken. Some people think: “No, no, more severe punishment is needed, more years, more!”. This solves nothing, nothing! To cage people because — pardon the word — for the mere fact that if he is inside we are safe, this serves nothing, it does not help us. The most important thing is what God does for us: he takes us by the hand and helps us to go forward. And this is called hope! And with this hope, with this trust it is possible to walk day by day. And with this steadfast love, which accompanies us, hope never lets us down, truly.

I thank you for the welcome. And I would like to say... this comes to mind now, because I always feel it, even when, every 15 days I phone a prison in Buenos Aires, where there are young people and we talk a little on the ’phone. I’ll tell you something personal. When I meet with one of you, who is in jail, who is moving toward reintegration, but who is imprisoned, I sincerely wonder: why him and not me? I feel this way. It’s a mystery. But beginning with this feeling, with this feeling I accompany you.

Let us pray together to Our Lady, our Mother, that she help us and accompany us. She is Mother. *Hail Mary*....

And please pray for me! Pray for me!

**2nd Reading: Japanese Ethics**

* [WORLD](http://www.wsj.com/news/world) [ASIA](http://www.wsj.com/news/world/asia)

Japan Pushes Traditional Ethics With an Eye to the Past

Conservatives seek guidelines for schools amid perception that youth hold country in low regard

By MITSURU OBE

TOKYO—Japan is preparing to reintroduce the teaching of traditional Japanese ethics in schools, as the nation’s conservatives seek to restore the values they say were rooted out during the U.S. occupation after World War II.

The education initiative is part of an effort by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his conservative allies to push policies meant to cast Japan as a stronger, prouder and forward-looking country, one [less apologetic for its history](http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/08/14/5-messages-in-shinzo-abes-war-anniversary-statement/). That new assertiveness has sometimes provoked Japan’s neighbors and riled Japanese who say the popular leader is rolling back the liberal values that have kept Japan free, safe and prosperous.

The dispute has flared over official [visits to a controversial shrine](http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304361604579288074122459960) honoring the nation’s war dead, including convicted class-A war criminals, and the government’s reinterpretation of the constitution to give the military more freedom to fight and operate overseas.

On the education front, conservatives and liberals have rumbled over revisions to history textbooks and mandatory singing of the national anthem in schools.

The new teaching initiative stems from the conservative view that Japanese people—especially youth—hold their country and its history in low regard due to too much focus in schools on Japan’s wartime aggressions.

To counter that, Mr. Abe’s government this year set education guidelines that encourage patriotism and espouse love of Japan’s history, traditions and unique culture, including the ancient Shinto religion, as well as the importance of obeying rules, being kind and exerting self-control.

The 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education and prewar ethics education are the bases for the new guidelines, which publishers are now incorporating into textbooks. The books will be used in new ethics classes to be taught in elementary and middle school starting in 2018 after a period of public comment and government approval.

Mr. Abe’s initiative is welcomed by many Japanese who see a link between the Western emphasis on personal freedom and a moral decay they say is afflicting the country’s youth, as seen in rising cases of bullying, juvenile delinquency and classroom disorder.

“Teachers and students have become equals, resulting in loss of authority in the classroom,” said Shigeki Kaizuka, professor at Musashino University and a leading advocate of ethics education. “The classroom has been reduced to a jungle, creating room for bullying.”

But the new curriculum is also stoking fears.The Japan Teachers’ Union opposes the new curriculum, saying that evaluating students on traditional ethics is akin to forcing values on students, a spokesman, Hiroaki Akaike, said. The union contends that rather than focusing on teaching people to love the country, the government should concentrate its efforts on making Japan deserving of that love, he added.

In one rural mountain-ringed elementary school in Ome City, a recent ethics class concerned “how to better understand each other.” Mika Hakamada, the teacher, asked a class of sixth-graders to imagine a group of unfamiliar students angrily yelling at them from across a river. “How would you respond? Yell back? Ignore? Or ask them what they are saying?”A discussion followed, as Ms. Hakamada urged the students, “Don’t try to give pleasing answers. Be honest.”

While some teachers worry this freewheeling method of ethics instruction could suffer once a formal curriculum is introduced, others support it.

Makoto Takagi, a high-school social-studies teacher in Kanagawa prefecture, said “learning to respect diverse values” may take a back to seat to keeping order in the classroom. “Without order in school, no studying or teaching is possible,” he said.

Opinion polls indicate a solid majority of Japanese support the idea of general ethics education, with respondents citing youth violence and the need for students to develop more empathy for others as reasons. The polls didn’t address patriotism or respect for authority.

Driving Mr. Abe’s efforts to cast Japan in a more positive light are the running disputes over wartime history with neighboring China and South Korea, which has led to “soul-searching over the national identity,” said Shiro Takahashi, an education professor at Meisei University and an influential voice among conservatives.

Ethics was considered the most important subject in schools during the imperial era. At its heart was the Imperial Rescript on Education, a document once considered sacred. It contained a wide range of Confucian virtues, and demanded devotion to the emperor and personal sacrifice for the state.

After the war, the U.S. occupation authorities scrapped the rescript and ethics education, which many saw as sources of the unthinking obedience and moral certitude that helped fuel Japan’s militarism. In 1947, the postwar government passed the Fundamental Law on Education, designed to bolster the liberal, democratic values of the postwar pacifist constitution.

Returning traditional ethics to schools has been a goal of Japan’s conservatives ever since. A toned down ethics curriculum was reintroduced after the end of the occupation in 1958 and remains in place today. But the once-a-week course is ungraded and unstructured, and there are no textbooks.

In 2006, during his first term, Mr. Abe presided over the first-ever revision of the education law, opening the door to a return of traditional ethics. Love of the nation and respect for its traditions and culture were established as official goals of the Japanese education system.

Atsuko Tsuruta, a retired professor of education at the University of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo, views the shift as a step backward. She recalls, with little affection, when Japanese schools emphasized respect for authority and rules, with large signs in schools that stated, “Obedience.”

“The prewar education praised obedience as a virtue, especially for women,” she said. “People avoided expressing their opinions. Criticism was not encouraged.”

Ms. Tsuruta rejected the notion that classrooms have become too chaotic.

“That’s what democracy means. Democracy is a messy thing,” she said. “It is arrogant for adults to think children should be spared from dealing with confusion.”

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* **Questions:**
* **Be Attentive: January is the start of a new year, a time after the activities of the Christmas holidays to collect one’s self and to consider the challenges of “reintegration” as proposed by Pope Francis. The scripture reading and the Japanese Ethics article from the Wall Street Journal give us content to contemplate and consider. As you approach this New Year what changes and challenges will you lean into?**
* **Be Intelligent: The holidays might have brought you in more contact with family and the young how does the Japanese Ethics article strike your assessment on the need to pass on moral, ethical, and religious traditions? As we consider such traditions how effective have we been at home and at work?**
* **Be Reasonable: As we consider the challenges of personal “reintegration” what are the team, group or corporate “reintegration” issues that you might consider impacting? Consider the role of forgiveness in this process of “reintegration”. Where do we need to forgive ourselves and others in order to move forward?**
* **Be Responsible: Leaders need to take time and counsel around the important challenges of the future. How will the conversation today impact your week, your year? Discuss your thoughts, strategies and actions.**