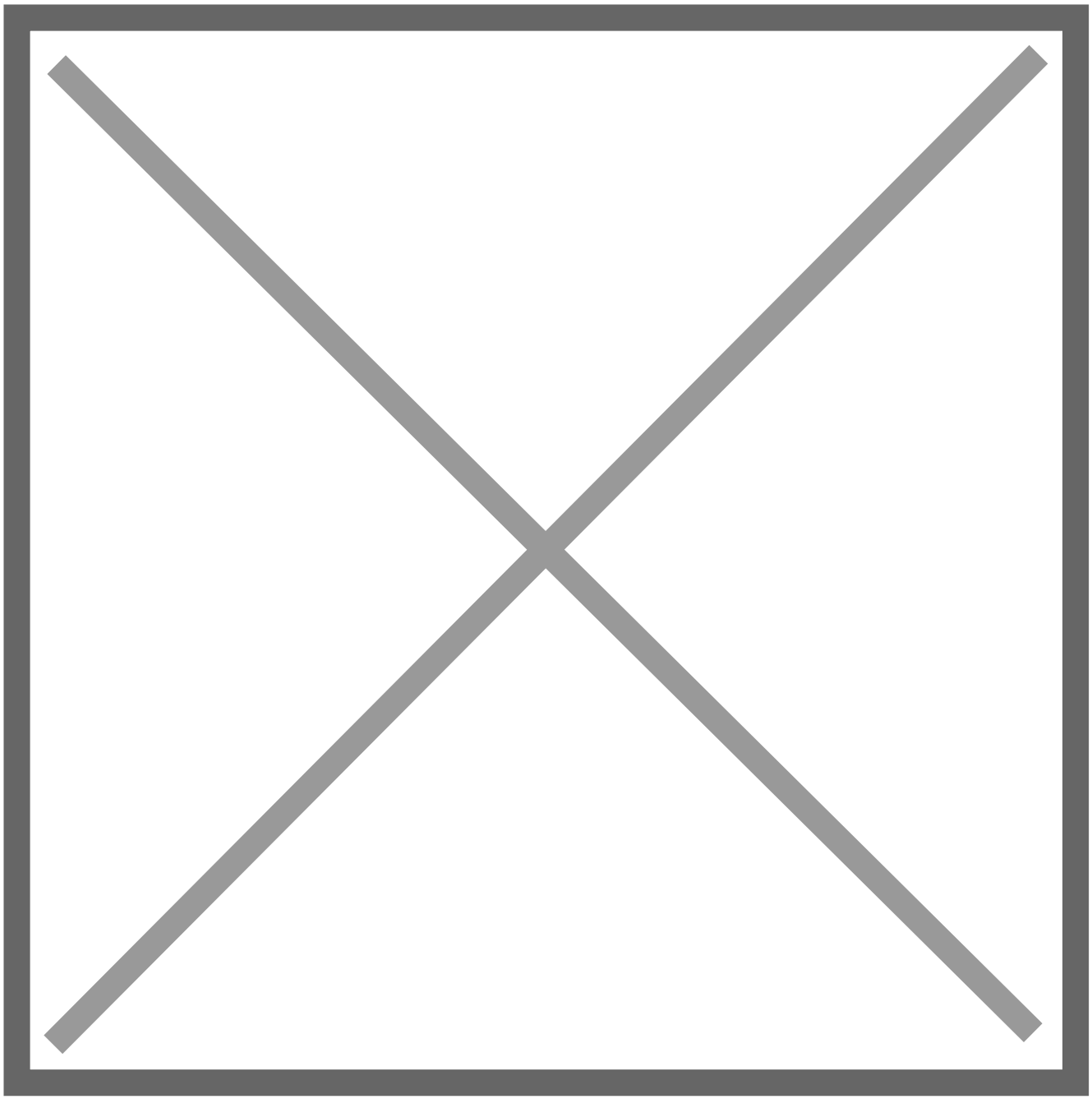
Vatican



A man carries a crucifix during the Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord's Passion in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 15, 2022. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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VATICAN CITY — Jesus invites everyone to repent and to turn swords into plowshares and missiles into factories and homes, the papal preacher said.

"This year we celebrate Easter not to the joyful sound of bells, but with the noise in the ears of bombs and explosions not far from here," Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa said during the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion.

"There is only one way to escape the current of time that drags everything with it: to pass on to that which does not pass," that is, the promise and truth of Jesus Christ, the source of salvation, he said in his homily during the April 15 service in St. Peter's Basilica.

Presided over by Pope Francis, the service on Good Friday commemorates Christ's passion and death on the cross.

The pope began the rite after a silent procession down the central nave, where he stood in silent prayer before the main altar. Customarily, he would have knelt to lie prostrate on the floor in prayer, a sign of adoration and penance; however, he has been having ongoing difficulty with his knee.

During the veneration of the cross, after the homily, the pope wore a red chasuble and prayed in silence before kissing the cross and then holding it aloft for veneration. Because of safety measures in place to limit the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, the cross was then placed before the main altar for veneration from the pews, without people processing before the cross to genuflect and kiss

Christ's feet.

Following tradition, the homily was delivered by Cardinal Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household.

He reflected on St. John's account of the dialogue between Jesus and Pontius Pilate and how "Jesus treats Pilate as a soul who needs light and truth, and not as a judge."

Jesus encourages Pilate to "come to his senses, to look at things with different eyes, to place himself above the momentary dispute with the Jews" and receive the truth, the cardinal said.

Even though Pilate understands Jesus' invitation, he is "skeptical and indifferent," he said. "The mystery he glimpses in Jesus' words frightens him," and Pilate ends the conversation, muttering to himself "What is truth?" before walking away.

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Today, some believe there is no truth or certainty, others believe "there is too much injustice, too much suffering in the world to believe in God," the cardinal said.

But think "how much more absurd and hopeless the evil that surrounds us becomes without faith in a final triumph of truth and good," he said.

Pope Francis was scheduled later that night to preside over the Stations of the Cross in Rome's Colosseum.

The meditations for the 14 stations were written by a number of families who, despite dealing with great difficulties in life, find hope in their faith and strength when they come together as a family.

The cross was to be carried by different families, including a young married couple, a family that lost a child, a family of migrants and a Ukrainian and a Russian family together.

The Vatican also released a transcript of an interview televised on a religious program aired earlier in the day on RAI, the Italian television station.

In the interview, Pope Francis said he understands why governments buy weapons, but "I do not justify them."

That nations have to defend themselves is what the mindset of Cain who killed his brother. "If there were a pattern of peace, this (need for defense) would not be necessary."

"But we live with this diabolic pattern of killing one another out of the desire for power, the desire for security, the desire for many things. But I think of the hidden wars, those no one sees, that are far away from us," he said.

People speak about peace, he said, and "The United Nations has done everything possible, but they have not succeeded. I go back to Calvary. There, Jesus did everything. With mercy, with goodness, he tried to convince the leaders, but no: war, war, war against him!"

He said he prays every morning to St. Michael the Archangel "so that it might help me conquer the devil."

He said, "I am afraid of him, this is why I have to defend myself so much. The devil was the one who did all that maneuvering so that Jesus would end up like he did, on the cross. The powers of darkness over Jesus: 'This is your hour,' the powers of darkness."