



He renews all things

The journey of conversion that has led to the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network

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When Father Adolfo Nicolás asked us not only to renew the Apostleship of Prayer but also to re-create it from scratch, the request might have seemed unrealistic. But in fact, this task doesn't depend on us because only the Holy Spirit is able to "renew all things," (cf. 2 Cor 5,17). What does

depend on us is our willingness to enter a process of conversion both as individuals and as an institution.

Today, this process of institutional rebuilding, although still continuing in many places, is virtually finished. On June 28th 2019, on

the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we celebrated, along with Pope Francis, and 6000 people representing 56 national delegations and the Eucharistic Youth Movement, the 175th anniversary of the Apostleship of Prayer which is known today as the Pope's World-

wide Prayer Network. Thanks to the internet, thousands of members were able to join the event “live.” It was a good opportunity to review the process of re-creation of the Apostleship that began in 2009 and to evaluate how it has gone so far. However, the re-creation process is still fragile, because it depends, above all else, on our journey of personal conversion.

A long process of conversion

In fact, the restructuring of this ecclesial service, which today is a Pontifical work, does not depend on us, nor our efforts, nor communication technology or the creative projects we have launched (“The Pope’s Video”, Click to Pray, etc...). Neither does it depend on the new forms of expression we have found, nor the new network of structures we have set up to incarnate our mission in today’s world. Our rebuilding depends solely on the Lord. What does depend on us is what we have now established at an institutional level: the launch of processes able to stimulate new growth and help us enter into a new understanding of our mission. It is down to us to unite ourselves to the Heart of Christ and to become, day by day, more docile to his Spirit.

Institutional conversion cannot exist without personal conversion. This is somewhat more complicated when this kind of process not only covers a timeframe of several years but also has to accommodate teams that are endlessly renewed in 98 separate countries, and representing a huge diversity of local and ecclesial contexts and cultures. And that is without mentioning the millions of people taking part, the majority coming from mainstream or parish backgrounds, and ranging age-wise from



the extremely elderly to the youngest members of the Eucharistic Youth Movement.

A necessary path of conversion

This process of re-creation leads us to personal conversion: the Lord is the only person who can truly

change our ways of thinking, seeing and perceiving things. Only he can help us to enter into the new reality he has prepared for us. Journeys like this teem with misunderstandings as we see clearly in the Gospels. It is always difficult to coordinate continuity and novelty. Does not Jesus himself speak of the “the new cloth and the old,” (Mk 2,21) or “new wine



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in old wineskins” (Mk 2,22)? On Easter morning, it is truly the Risen Christ who appears on the shores of Lake Galilee, even though the disciples barely recognise him. This has been our experience over these last few years with the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network.

However, in order to consolidate our new foundation, we should be able to accompany more people along this path of personal conversion. That is what we are offering through the “Way of the Heart” experience.



The Way of the Heart, a journey of conversion

Meditating on, praying and entering the Way of the Heart: this is the formation programme we offer. The

spiritual foundation of our mission, it is split into nine steps, one for each of the nine first Fridays of each month, and it aims to make us available to the Church for her mission of compassion for the world.

The Way of the Heart helps us to discover the challenges of the world through the eyes of Christ, so that, being docile to the Holy Spirit, we can mobilise each month for prayer and service. United to the Heart of



Christ, we discover his joys and sufferings for the world. Likewise, the Way of the Heart leads us to confirm our commitment to him, to be as close as possible to his heart, facing the challenges of humanity, and the mission of the Church. These challenges we discover every month thanks to the Pope's prayer intentions. Every day, we are more deeply transformed into apostles of prayer, leaving behind the globalisation of indifference and enlarging our hearts to embrace the whole world.

The Way is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It can be seen, for instance, as an adaptation of the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ which invites us to make an offering of ourselves. The Way of the Heart is our specific way of entering, from an apostolic perspective, the spiritual dynamic of the Heart of Jesus. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis invites us into just this missionary dynamic.

Without this journey of personal conversion, the reconstruction of this ecclesial service would not stand the test of time. This is why we have been immersed in the third phase since 2018. It is the deepest and most delicate because it depends on our relationship with God. Personal conversion to this new spiritual understanding of our mission can be compared to the invisible part of an iceberg: it is the invisible foundation of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network that is essential for our re-building to truly exist on solid ground.

Translated by Elizabeth Twiston Davies

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