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## PRAYER AND SERVICE CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT HUMANITY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH • 2024 •

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FOR THE GIFT OF DIVERSITY IN  
THE CHURCH

**JANUARY**

**“Let us pray that the Spirit  
help us recognize the gift of  
different charisms within the  
Christian community, and to  
discover the richness of  
different ritual traditions in  
the heart of the Catholic  
Church”**

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### PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

GENERAL AUDIENCE<sup>1</sup>

Francis

1st October 2014

From the very beginning, the Lord has showered the Church with the gifts of his Spirit, thereby rendering her always vigorous and fruitful with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Among these gifts, some can be identified as especially precious for the edification of and for the journey of the Christian community: these are called charisms. In this catechesis we want to ask ourselves: what exactly is a charism? How can we recognize it and embrace it? And most of all: should the fact that there is a diversity and a multiplicity of charisms in the Church be seen in a positive sense, as a good thing, or as a problem?

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<sup>1</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141001\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141001_udienza-generale.html)

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In common parlance, when a "charism" is spoken of, it often means a talent, a natural ability. One says: "This person has a special charism to teach. It is a talent he or she has". Thus, it is often said, regarding an especially bright and engaging person: "He or she is a charismatic person". "What does this mean?". "I don't know, but he is charismatic". And we say this. We don't know what we are saying, but we say: "He is charismatic". In the Christian perspective, however, a charism is much more than a personal quality, a predisposition that one can be endowed with: a charism is a grace, a gift bestowed by God the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit. And it is a gift which is given to someone not because he is better than others or because he deserves it: it is a gift that God gives him, because with his freely given love he can place him in service to the entire community, for the good of all. Speaking in a rather more human way, one says: "God gives this quality, this charism to this person, not for himself, but in order that he may put it at the service of the whole community". Today before arriving in the Square, I received many disabled children in the Paul VI Hall. There were so many of them belonging to an association that is dedicated to caring for these children. What is it? This association, these people, these men and these women, have a charism to care for disabled children. This is a charism!

An important thing that should be highlighted immediately is the fact that alone, one cannot understand whether one has a charism, and which one. Many times we have heard someone say: "I have this quality, I can sing really well". And no one has the courage to say: "It's better to keep quiet, because you torture all of us when you sing!". No one can say: "I have this charism". It is within the community that the gifts the Father showers upon us bloom and flourish; and it is in the bosom of the community that one learns to recognize them as a sign of his love for all his children. So, each one of us should ask him/herself: "Is there a charism that the Lord has endowed me with, by the grace of his Spirit, and that my brothers and sisters in the Christian community have recognized and encouraged? And how do I act with regard to this gift: do I use it with generosity, placing it at the service of everyone, or do I overlook it and end up forgetting about it? Or perhaps it becomes a reason for pride in me, such that I always complain about others and insist on getting my way in the community? These are questions that we must ask ourselves: if there is a charism in me, if this charism is recognized by the Church, if I am happy with this charism or am I a bit jealous of the charisms of others, whether I wanted or I want to have that charism. A charism is a gift: God alone bestows it!

The most beautiful experience, though, is the discovery of all the different charisms and all the gifts of his Spirit that the Father showers on his Church! This must not be seen as a reason for confusion, for discomfort: they are all gifts that God gives to the Christian community, in order that it may grow in harmony, in the faith and in his love, as one body, the Body of Christ. The same Spirit who bestows this diversity of charisms unites the Church. It is always the same Spirit. Before this multitude of charisms, our heart, therefore, must open itself to joy and we must think: "What a beautiful thing! So many different gifts, because we are all God's children, all loved in a unique way". Never must these gifts become reasons for envy, or for division, for jealousy! As the Apostle Paul recalls in Chapter 12 of his First Letter to the Corinthians, all charisms are important in the eyes of God. At the same time, no one is irreplaceable. That is to say that within the Christian community, we need one another, and each gift received is fully realized when it is shared with one's brothers and sisters, for the good of all. This is the Church! And when the Church, in the variety of her charisms, is expressed in communion, she cannot be mistaken: it is the beauty and the power of the *sensus fidei*, of that supernatural sense of faith which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit in order that, together, we may all enter the heart of the Gospel and learn to follow Jesus in our life.

Today the Church is celebrating the Feast of St Teresa of the Child Jesus. This Saint, who died at the age of 24, loved the Church so much that she wanted to be a missionary, and said: "I would like to do this, this and



this", she wanted all the charisms. She prayed, and she felt that her charism was love. And she said this beautiful phrase: "In the heart of the Church I will be love". And we all have this charism: the capacity to love. Today let us ask St Teresa of the Child Jesus for this capacity to love the Church so much, to love her so much, and to embrace all those charisms with this love of the children of the Church, of our Holy, Hierarchical Mother Church

**The Pope Video - OCTOBER 2022:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/october-for-a-church-open-to-everyone/>

**The Pope Video - AUGUST 2021:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/august-church-on-the-way/>

**The Pope Video – MARCH 2020:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/catholics-in-china/>

**The Pope Video – May 2019:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/the-church-in-africa-a-seed-of-unity/>

**The Pope Video – January 2018:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/religious-minorities-in-asia/>

**The Pope Video – May 2017:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/christians-of-africa-witnesses-for-peace/>

**The Pope Video – January 2017:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/christians-serving-humanity/>



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FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

**FEBRUARY**

**“Let us pray that the sick  
who are in the final stages of  
life, and their families,  
receive the necessary  
medical and human care and  
accompaniment”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

To participants in the Plenary Session  
of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith<sup>2</sup>  
Francis  
30 January 2020

[...] When sickness knocks at the door of our life, the need emerges increasingly to have next to us someone who looks at us in the eyes, who holds our hand, who manifests his tenderness and takes care of us, as the Good Samaritan of the evangelical parable (Cf. Message to the 28th World Day of the Sick, February 2020).

The subject of the care of the sick, in the critical and terminal phases of life, calls into question the task of the Church to rewrite the “grammar” of taking charge and taking care of the suffering person. The example of the Good Samaritan teaches that it’s necessary to convert the heart’s gaze, because very often one who looks doesn’t see. Why? Why? — because compassion is lacking. There comes to mind that, many times the Gospel, speaking of Jesus before a suffering person, says: “He took pity on him,” “He took pity on him” . . . A refrain of Jesus’ person. Without compassion, one who looks is not involved in what he observes and moves on. Instead, one who has a compassionate heart is touched and involved, stops and takes care <of the patient>.

It is necessary to create around the sick person a true and proper human platform of relations that, while fostering medical care, open to hope, especially in those limit-situations in which the physical ailment is accompanied by emotional discomfort and spiritual anguish.

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<sup>2</sup> See full message:

<https://zenit.org/2020/01/30/pope-francis-address-to-plenary-of-vaticans-congregation-for-doctrine-of-the-faith-full-text/>

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The relational approach — and not merely clinical — with the patient, considered in the uniqueness and totally of his person, imposes the duty never to abandon anyone in the presence of incurable illnesses. Human life, given its eternal destiny, keeps all its value and all its dignity in any condition, also of precariousness and fragility, and, as such, is always worthy of the greatest consideration. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who lived the style of proximity and sharing, keeping up to the end the recognition and respect of human dignity, and rendering dying more human, said thus: "One who in the path of life has lighted even just one torch in someone's dark hour has not lived in vain."

In this connection, I think of how much good hospices do for palliative care, where the terminally sick are accompanied by qualified medical, psychological and spiritual support, so that they can live with dignity, comforted by the closeness of dear persons, the final phase of their earthly life. I hope that such centers will continue to be places in which the "therapy of dignity" is practiced with commitment, thus nourishing love and respect for life. [...]

### UDIENZA GENERALE<sup>3</sup>

Francis

9 febbraio 2022

The Gospel tells us that death comes like a thief. This is what Jesus tells us: it arrives like a thief, and however much we try to keep its arrival under control, perhaps even planning our own death, it remains an event that we must reckon with, and before which we must also make choices.

Two considerations stand for us Christians. The first: we cannot avoid death, and precisely for this reason, after having done everything that is humanly possible to cure the sick, it is immoral to engage in overzealous treatment (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2278). That phrase of the faithful people of God, of the simple people: "Let him die in peace", "help him to die in peace": such wisdom! The second consideration instead concerns the quality of death itself, the quality of pain, of suffering. Indeed, we must be grateful for all the help that medicine is striving to give, so that through so-called "palliative care", every person who is preparing to live the last stretch of their life can do so in the most humane way possible. However, we must be careful not to confuse this help with unacceptable drifts towards killing. We must accompany people towards death, but not provoke death or facilitate any form of suicide. Remember that the right to care and treatment for all must always be prioritised, so that the weakest, particularly the elderly and the sick, are never rejected. Life is a right, not death, which must be welcomed, not administered. And this ethical principle concerns everyone, not just Christians or believers.

I would like to underline a real social problem. That "planning" — I don't know if it is the right word — but accelerating the death of the elderly. Very often we see in a certain social class that the elderly, since they do not have means, are given fewer medicines than they need, and this is inhuman; this is not helping them, it is driving them towards death earlier. This is neither human nor Christian. The elderly should be cared for as a treasure of humanity: they are our wisdom. Even if they do not speak, or if they do not make sense, they are still

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<sup>3</sup>See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2022/documents/20220209-udienza-generale.html>

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the symbol of human wisdom. They are those who went before us and have left us many beautiful things, many memories, much wisdom. Please, do not isolate the elderly, do not accelerate the death of the elderly. To caress an elderly person has the same hope as caressing a child, because the beginning of life and the end are always a mystery, a mystery that should be respected, accompanied, cared for, loved.

**The Pope Video - APRIL 2021:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/april-for-health-care-workers/>

- 11 February 2024 - WORLD DAY OF THE SICK



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FOR NEW MARTYRS

## MARCH

**“Let us pray that those who  
risk their lives for the Gospel  
in various parts of the world  
might imbue the Church with  
their courage and  
missionary drive”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

HOMILY IN MEMORY OF THE MARTYRS OF THE 20th AND 21st CENTURY<sup>4</sup>

Francis

22 April 2017

We have come as pilgrims to this Basilica of Saint Bartholomew on the Tiber Island, where the ancient history of martyrdom unites with the memory of the new martyrs, of the many Christians killed by the demented ideologies of the last century — and today too — and killed solely for being disciples of Jesus.

The memory of these ancient and recent heroic witnesses confirms us in the knowledge that the Church is Church if she is the Church of martyrs. Martyrs are those who, as the Book of Revelation reminds us, “have come out of the great tribulation” and “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). They had the grace to confess Jesus until the end, unto death. They suffer; they give their life, and we receive God’s blessing through their witness. And there are also many hidden martyrs, those men and women faithful to the gentle power of love, to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who in everyday life seek to help their brothers and sisters and to love God without reservation.

If we look closely, the cause of all persecution is hatred: the hatred of the prince of this world toward those who have been saved and redeemed by Jesus through his death and his Resurrection. In the Gospel passage we have heard (cf. Jn 15:12-19), Jesus uses a harsh and frightening word: the word “hate”. He, who is master of love, who so liked speaking about love, speaks of hate. He always wished to call things by their name. And he tells us: “Be not afraid! The world will hate you; but know that before you, it hated me”.

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<sup>4</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170422\\_omelia-nuovi-martiri.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170422_omelia-nuovi-martiri.html)

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Jesus chose us and redeemed us, through the freely given gift of his love. With his death and Resurrection he redeemed us from the power of the world, from the power of the devil, from the power of the prince of this world. The origin of hatred is this: since we are saved by Jesus, and the prince of the world does not want this, he hates us and causes persecution, which, since the time of Jesus and of the nascent Church, continues to our day. How many Christian communities today are the object of persecution! Why? Because of the hatred of the worldly spirit.

How often, in difficult moments of history, has it been heard: "Today the homeland needs heroes". A martyr can be thought of as a hero, but the fundamental thing about a martyr is that he or she was "graced": it is the grace of God, not courage, that makes us martyrs. Today, in the same way one could ask: "What does the Church need today?". Martyrs, witnesses, namely, everyday saints. Because the Church is led forward by saints. Saints: without them, the Church can no longer go forth. The Church needs everyday saints, those of ordinary life carried out with coherence; but she also needs those who have the courage to accept the grace to be witnesses to the end, unto death. All those are the living blood of the Church. They are the witnesses who lead the Church forward; those who attest that Jesus is Risen, that Jesus lives, and affirm it with coherence of life and with the strength of the Holy Spirit which they have been given.

Today, I would like to add one more icon, in this Church. A woman. I do not know her name. But she is watching us from heaven. I was in Lesvos; I was greeting the refugees and I found a 30-year-old man, with three children. He looked at me and said: "Father, I am a Muslim. My wife was Christian. Terrorists came to our country, they looked at us and asked us our religion and saw her with the Crucifix, and they asked her to throw it on the ground. She did not do so and they cut her throat in front of me. We loved each other so much!". This is the icon that I bring here today as a gift. I do not know if that man is still in Lesvos or has managed to go elsewhere. I do not know if he was able to get out of that concentration camp, because refugee camps — so many — are like concentration camps, because of the crowd of people who are left there. And the generous people who welcome them must also continue to bear this burden, because it seems that international agreements are more important than human rights. And this man did not have rancour: he, a Muslim, had this painful cross, carried on without rancour. He took refuge in the love of his wife, graced with martyrdom.

Remembering these witnesses of faith and praying in this place is a great gift. It is a gift for the Community of Sant'Egidio, for the Church in Rome, for all the Christian communities of this city, and for so many pilgrims. The living legacy of martyrs gives us peace and unity today. They teach us that, with the power of love, with meekness, one can fight against arrogance, violence and war, and one can bring about peace with patience. And thus, we can pray in this way: O Lord, make us worthy witnesses to the Gospel and to your love; pour out your mercy upon humanity; renew your Church; protect persecuted Christians; hasten to grant the whole world peace. To you, Lord, glory; and to us, Lord, shame (cf. Dn 9:7).





GENERAL AUDIENCE<sup>5</sup>

Francis

29 April 2020

It is painful to recall that in this very moment, there are many Christians in various parts of the world who are suffering from persecution, and we must hope and pray that their trials will soon end. They are many: today's martyrs outnumber the martyrs of the first centuries. Let us express our closeness to these brothers and sisters. We are a single body and these Christians are the bleeding limbs of the body of Christ who is the Church.

But we also have to be careful not to read this Beatitude from a self commiserating, victimized perspective. In fact, mankind's contempt is not always synonymous with persecution: indeed shortly later, Jesus tells Christians that they are the "salt of the earth" and warns against the danger of "losing their taste" because in that case, salt "is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Mt 5:13). Thus, when we lose the taste of Christ and the Gospel, there is also contempt which is our fault.

We have to be faithful to the humble way of the Beatitudes because it leads us to be of Christ and not of the world. It is worth remembering the journey of Saint Paul. When he thought he was a righteous person, he was in fact a persecutor, but when he found out he was a persecutor, he became a man of love who rejoiced in the suffering of the persecution inflicted on him (cf. Col 1:24).

If God grants us the grace to be more like the Crucified Christ and joined to his Passion, then exclusion and persecution are the manifestation of new life. This life is the same as the life of Christ who was "despised and rejected" for us men and women and for our salvation" (cf. Is 53:3; Acts 8:30-35). Welcoming his Spirit can lead us to have so much love in our heart as to offer our life for the world without making compromises with its deceit and accepting its rejection.

Compromises with the world are dangerous: Christians are always tempted to make compromises with the world, with the spirit of the world. This — rejecting compromises and journeying on the way of Jesus Christ — is the life of the Kingdom of Heaven, the greatest joy and true happiness. And, in persecutions there is always the presence of Jesus who accompanies us, the presence of Jesus who comforts us and the strength of the Holy Spirit that helps us to go forward. Let us not be discouraged when a life that is faithful to the Gospel draws persecution from people. There is the Holy Spirit who sustains us in this journey.

**The Pope Video - March 2017:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/help-persecuted-christians/>

**The Pope Video - JANUARY 2022:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/january-religious-discrimination-and-persecution/>

- **22 August 2023 - The International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief**

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<sup>5</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200429\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200429_udienza-generale.html)

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FOR THE ROLE OF WOMEN

APRIL

**“Let us pray that the dignity  
and worth of women be  
recognized in every culture,  
and for an end to the  
discrimination they face in  
various parts of the world”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDATION “CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE”  
AND THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE OF CATHOLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES <sup>6</sup>

Francis

11 March 2023

[...] I would like to emphasize three aspects of care as a contribution that women make towards greater inclusivity, greater respect for others and confronting new challenges in a new way.

First, greater inclusivity. The volume discusses the problem of the discrimination often encountered by women, together with other vulnerable groups in society. I have frequently insisted that diversity must never end up in inequality, but in grateful mutual acceptance. True wisdom is multifaceted; it is learned and lived out by journeying together; only thus does it become a “driver” of peace. Your research thus represents a summons, thanks to women and on behalf of women, not to discriminate but to integrate everyone, especially those most vulnerable, at the economic, cultural, racial and gender levels. No one is to be excluded: this is a sacred principle. Indeed, the plan of God the Creator is a plan that is essentially and always “inclusive”, centred precisely on “those living on the existential peripheries”. [2] A plan that can be compared to a mother, who sees her children as different fingers of her hand: inclusive, always inclusive.

The second contribution: greater respect for others. Each person must be respected in his or her dignity and fundamental rights: education, employment, freedom of expression, and so forth. This is particularly the case for women, who are more easily subject to violence and abuse. I once heard an expert in history explain how women came to wear jewelry – women wear jewelry, but now men do too! In a polygamous culture, if a husband decided he didn't like one of his wives, he would tell her to leave, and she had to depart immediately with whatever she was wearing, without being able to come back and collect her things. That, according to this account, is how women began to wear gold, the origin of jewelry. Perhaps it is only a legend, but it may have

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<sup>6</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/march/documents/20230311-incontro.html>

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something to say to us. From times of old, women have been the first thing to be cast off, discarded. And that is terribly wrong. Every person, together with his or her rights, is to be respected.

We cannot be silent before this scourge of our time. Women are being used. Even here, in a city! They pay you less, because you are a woman. Woe to you if you are pregnant, because if you are clearly pregnant, you won't get the job, and if it shows in the workplace, you'll be sent away. This is one of the ways that women today, in large cities, are discarded, because they bear children. It is important to recognize this fact; it is a scourge. Let us make heard the voices of women who are victims of abuse and exploitation, marginalization and undue pressures, like those I mentioned with regard to the workplace. Let us become the voice of their pain, and denounce forcefully the injustices to which they are subjected, often in situations that deprive them of any possibility of defence and redemption. Let us also make space for their activities, which are naturally and potentially sensitive and oriented towards the safeguarding of life in every state, age and condition.

We now come to the third point: confronting new challenges in a new way. Creativity. It is undeniable that women contribute to the common good in their own unique way. We see this already in sacred Scripture, where women frequently play a critical role at decisive moments in salvation history. We think of Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, Susanna and Ruth, culminating with Mary and the women who followed Jesus even to the cross, where – let us not forget – the only man who remained was John, the others all departed. Only the courageous remained, and they were women. Then too, in the history of the Church, we can think of women like Catherine of Siena, Josephine Bakhita, Edith Stein, Teresa of Calcutta, but also of the “women next door”, those who heroically put up with difficult marriages, children with problems... such is the heroism of women. Apart from the clichés of a certain genre of hagiography, these are all women of impressive determination, courage, fidelity, remarkable for their ability to persevere, even amid suffering, and to communicate joy, integrity, humility and firm resolve.

In Buenos Aires, I used to take the bus to the northwest part of the city where there were many parishes. The bus would pass by a prison where there was always a long line of people going to visit the prisoners: ninety percent of them were women, mothers, mothers who never abandon their children! Mothers. And this is the strength of a woman: a silent strength, an enduring strength. Our history abounds in women of this kind, whether famous or anonymous (albeit not to God!): women who have inspired and sustained the journey of families, societies and the Church, some of them putting up with difficult and dissolute husbands, yet always caring for their children. We also see this here in the Vatican, where women who work hard, also in roles of great responsibility, are now numerous, thanks be to God. For example, once a woman became the Secretary General, things are working better here, much better. And other places, where there are women, secretaries... The Council for the Economy, for example, used to be made up of six cardinals and six laypersons, all men. Two years ago, there was a change of personnel, and now there is one lay man and five lay women, and it has begun to function, because they have a different kind of ability, ways of acting and also patience. Once a powerful union leader, someone who had worked himself up from the ranks, told the story of how, when he was young, he had no father, only his mother, who was very poor and employed as a domestic. They lived in a tiny apartment with his mother's bedroom and a small dining room where he would sleep. Often he would get drunk at night – at the time, he was 22 or 23 years old – and when his mother would go out in the morning to work, she would stop and look at him. He was awake but pretended to be asleep; she would look at him and then leave for work. “My mother's perseverance, her looking at me, putting up with me, not scolding me.... that eventually turned me around and that is how I got to where I am today”. Only a woman can do this; his father would have kicked him out of the house. We have to appreciate the way women do things: it is something grand. [...]



**The Pope Video - FEBRUARY 2022:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/february-for-religious-sisters-and-consecrated-women/>

**The Pope Video - FEBBRAIO 2021:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/february-for-women-who-are-victims-of-violence/>

**The Pope Video - OCTOBER 2020:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/october-women-in-leadership-roles-in-the-church/>

**The Pope Video - May 2016:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/october-women-in-leadership-roles-in-the-church/>

- **8 March 2024 - International Women's Day**



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FOR THE FORMATION OF MEN  
AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS, AND  
SEMINARIANS

**MAY**

**“Let us pray that men and  
women religious, and  
seminarians, grow in their  
own vocational journey  
through human, pastoral,  
spiritual and community  
formation, that leadsthem to  
be credible witnesses of the  
Gospel”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION  
VERITATIS GAUDIUM <sup>7</sup>  
Francis  
27 December 2017

2. [...] As I have had occasion to note, “one of the main contributions of the Second Vatican Council was precisely seeking a way to overcome this divorce between theology and pastoral care, between faith and life. I dare say that the Council has revolutionized to some extent the status of theology – the believer’s way of doing and thinking”.<sup>[4]</sup> (...) in dialogue with all people of our time, listening attentively to their concerns, their sufferings and their needs.<sup>[8]</sup> Consequently, *Optatam Totius* stresses, “pastoral concern... ought to permeate thoroughly the entire training of the students”,<sup>[9]</sup> so that they become accustomed to “transcending the limits of their own diocese, nation, or rite, and to helping the needs of the whole Church, [and] prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere”.<sup>[10]</sup>

3. This rich legacy of analysis and direction has been tested and enriched, as it were, “on the ground” thanks to the persevering commitment to a social and cultural meditation on the Gospel undertaken by the People of God in different continental areas and in dialogue with diverse cultures. The time has now come for it to be consolidated and to impart to ecclesiastical studies that wise and courageous renewal demanded by the missionary transformation of a Church that “goes forth”.

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<sup>7</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco\\_costituzione-ap\\_20171208\\_veritatis-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20171208_veritatis-gaudium.html)

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The primary need today is for the whole People of God to be ready to embark upon a new stage of “Spirit-filled” evangelization.<sup>[19]</sup> This calls for “a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform”.<sup>[20]</sup> In this process, a fitting renewal of the system of ecclesiastical studies plays a strategic role. These studies, in fact, are called to offer opportunities and processes for the suitable formation of priests, consecrated men and women, and committed lay people. At the same time, they are called to be a sort of providential cultural laboratory in which the Church carries out the performative interpretation of the reality brought about by the Christ event and nourished by the gifts of wisdom and knowledge by which the Holy Spirit enriches the People of God in manifold ways – from the *sensus fidei fidelium* to the magisterium of the bishops, and from the charism of the prophets to that of the doctors and theologians.

This is essential for a Church that “goes forth”! All the more so because today we are not only living in a time of changes but are experiencing a true epochal shift<sup>[21]</sup>, marked by a wide-ranging “anthropological”<sup>[22]</sup> and “environmental crisis”.<sup>[23]</sup> Indeed, we daily see “signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises”.<sup>[24]</sup> In a word, this calls for “changing the models of global development” and “redefining our notion of progress”.<sup>[25]</sup> Yet “the problem is that we still lack the culture necessary to confront this crisis. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths”.<sup>[26]</sup>

This vast and pressing task requires, on the cultural level of academic training and scientific study, a broad and generous effort at a radical paradigm shift, or rather – dare I say – at “a bold cultural revolution”.<sup>[27]</sup> In this effort, the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas.

The document is 87 pages long and aims to promote comprehensive education that takes into account all aspects of the individual.

**The Pope Video - FEBRUARY 2022:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/february-for-religious-sisters-and-consecrated-women/>

**The Pope Video - MAY 2020:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/may-for-deacons/>

**The Pope Video - June 2019:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/the-priests-way-of-life/>

**The Pope Video - October 2018:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/the-mission-of-religious/>

**The Pope Video - July 2018:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/priests-and-their-pastoral-ministry/>

➤ 30 March 2023 - WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS



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FOR THOSE FLEEING THEIR  
OWN COUNTRIES

**JUNE**

**“Let us pray that migrants  
fleeing from war or hunger,  
forced to undertake journeys  
fraught with danger and  
violence, may find welcome  
and new living opportunities  
in their host countries”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE  
FRATERNA DOMUS OF SACROFANO<sup>8</sup>

Francis

9 March 2023

[...] Hospitality is an expression of love, of that dynamism of openness that drives us to pay attention to the other, to seek out the best for his or her life (cf. FT, 97-98). On this aspect of love, the fundamental reference is Benedict XVI's first Encyclical, *Deus caritas est* (25 December 2005).

The second passage of *Fratelli tutti* that I propose to you is number 141. I quote in full: “The true worth of the different countries of our world is measured by their ability to think not simply as a country but also as part of the larger human family. This is seen especially in times of crisis. Narrow forms of nationalism are an extreme expression of an inability to grasp the meaning of this gratuitousness. They err in thinking that they can develop on their own, heedless of the ruin of others, that by closing their doors to others they will be better protected. Immigrants are seen as usurpers who have nothing to offer. This leads to the simplistic belief that the poor are dangerous and useless, while the powerful are generous benefactors. Only a social and political culture that readily and ‘gratuitously’ welcomes others will have a future”. We are in the fourth chapter, entitled “A gratuitousness open to others”, where it talks about a “gratuitousness that welcomes” (cf. nos. 139-141). The aspect of gratuitousness is essential to generate fraternity and social friendship. For you, I emphasize the final phrase: “Only a social and political culture that readily and ‘gratuitously’ welcomes others will have a future” (no. 141). Gratuitous welcome. Often, we talk about the contribution that migrants give or can give to the society that welcomes them. This is true and it is important. But the fundamental criterion does not lie in the usefulness of

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<sup>8</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/march/documents/20230309-incontro-fraternadomus.html>

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the person, but in the value in itself that he or she represents. The other deserves to be welcomed not so much for what he has, or what he can give, but for what he is.

**The Pope Video - FEBRUARY 2020:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/hear-the-cries-of-migrants/>

**The Pope Video - November 2016:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/countries-receiving-refugees/>

- September - WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES





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FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF  
THE SICK

**JULY**

**“Let us pray that the  
Sacrament of the Anointing  
of the Sick grant the Lord’s  
strength to those who  
receive it and to their loved  
ones, and that it may  
become for everyone an ever  
more visible sign of  
compassion and hope”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

GENERAL AUDIENCE<sup>9</sup>

Francis

26 February 2014

Today I would like to talk to you about the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which allows us to touch God’s compassion for man. In the past it was called “Extreme Unction”, because it was understood as a spiritual comfort in the face of imminent death. To speak instead of the “Anointing of the Sick” helps us broaden our vision to include the experience of illness and suffering, within the horizon of God’s mercy.

There is a biblical icon that expresses, in all its depths, the mystery that shines through the Anointing of the Sick: it is the parable of the “Good Samaritan” contained in the Gospel of Luke (10:30-35). Each time that we celebrate this Sacrament, the Lord Jesus, in the person of the priest, comes close to the one who suffers and is seriously ill or elderly. The parable says that the Good Samaritan takes care of the suffering man by pouring oil and wine on his wounds. Oil makes us think of that which is blessed by the Bishop each year at the Holy Thursday Chrism Mass, precisely in view of the Anointing of the Sick. Wine, however, is a sign of Christ’s love and grace, which flow from the gift of his life for us and are expressed in all their richness in the sacramental life of the Church. Finally, the suffering person is entrusted to an innkeeper, so that he might continue to care for him, sparing no expense. Now, who is this innkeeper? It is the Church, the Christian community — it is us — to whom each day

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<sup>9</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140226\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140226_udienza-generale.html)

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the Lord entrusts those who are afflicted in body and spirit, so that we might lavish all of his mercy and salvation upon them without measure.

This mandate is repeated in an explicit and precise manner in the Letter of James, where he recommends: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (5:14-15). It was therefore a practice that was already taking place at the time of the Apostles. Jesus in fact taught his disciples to have the same preferential love that he did for the sick and suffering, and he transmitted to them the ability and duty to continue providing, in his name and after his own heart, relief and peace through the special grace of this Sacrament. This, however, should not make us fall into an obsessive search for miracles or the presumption that one can always and in any situation be healed. Rather, it is the reassurance of Jesus' closeness to the sick and the aged, too, because any elderly person, anyone over the age of 65, can receive this Sacrament, through which Jesus himself draws close to us.

But when someone is sick, we at times think: "let's call for the priest to come"; "no, then he will bring bad luck, let's not call him", or "he will scare the sick person". Why do we think this? Because the idea is floating about that the undertakers arrive after the priest. And this is not true. The priest comes to help the sick or elderly person; that is why the priest's visit to the sick is so important; we ought to call the priest to the sick person's side and say: "come, give him the anointing, bless him". It is Jesus himself who comes to relieve the sick person, to give him strength, to give him hope, to help him; and also to forgive his sins. And this is very beautiful! And one must not think that this is taboo, because in times of pain and illness it is always good to know that we are not alone: the priest and those who are present during the Anointing of the Sick, in fact, represent the entire Christian community that as one body huddles around the one who suffers and his family, nurturing their faith and hope, and supporting them through their prayers and fraternal warmth. But the greatest comfort comes from the fact that it is the Lord Jesus himself who makes himself present in the Sacrament, who takes us by the hand, who caresses us as he did with the sick, and who reminds us that we already belong to him and that nothing — not even evil and death — can ever separate us from him. Are we in the habit of calling for the priest so that he might come to our sick — I am not speaking about those who are sick with the flu, for three or four days, but rather about a serious illness — and our elderly, and give them this Sacrament, this comfort, this strength of Jesus to continue on? Let us do so!

➤ 11 February - WORLD DAY OF THE SICK



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FOR POLITICAL LEADERS

**AUGUST**

**“Let us pray that political leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and the common good, taking caring of those who have lost their jobs and giving priority to the poor”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE "PROGETTO POLICORO"  
ORGANIZED BY THE ITALIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE<sup>10</sup>

Francis

18 March 2023

Today politics does not enjoy a good reputation, especially among the young, because they see scandals, many things that we all know. The causes are several, but how can one not think of corruption, inefficiency, distance from the lives of the people? Precisely for this reason, there is even greater need for good politics. And people make the difference. We see this in local administrations: it is one thing to have a mayor or a councillor who is available, another to have one who is inaccessible; one thing is politics that listens to reality, that listens to the poor, quite another that which is closed up in palaces, a “rarefied” politics.

I am reminded of the biblical episode of the King Ahab and the vineyard of Naboth. The king wants to appropriate for himself the vineyard of Naboth, to extend his garden; but Naboth does not want this and cannot sell it, because that vineyard is the legacy of his forefathers. The king is angry and sulks, like a spoiled child. Then his wife, Queen Jezebel – who is a devil! – solves the problem by contriving to eliminate Naboth on a false charge. So Naboth is killed and the king takes his vineyard. Ahab represents the worst kind of politics, that of forging ahead and making room for oneself by eliminating others, that pursues not the common good but particular

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<sup>10</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/march/documents/20230318-progetto-policoro.html>

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interests, and uses every means to satisfy them. Ahab is not a father, he is a master, and his rule is dominion. Saint Ambrose wrote a book on this bible story, entitled *De Nabuthae*, "On Naboth". At a certain point, addressing the powerful, Ambrose writes: "Why do you cast out those who share in the goods of nature and claim for yourselves alone the possession of natural goods? The earth was created in communion for all, for rich and for poor. [...] Nature knows not what the rich are, she who begets all equally poor. When we are born we have no clothes, we do not come into the world laden with gold and silver. This earth brings us into the world naked, in need of food, clothing and drink. Nature [...] creates us all equal and all equally encloses us in the womb of a tomb" (1,2). This short but precious work by Saint Ambrose will be useful for your formation. Politics that exercises power as dominion and not as service is not capable of caring, it tramples on the poor, exploits the earth and deals with conflict through war; it does not know how to dialogue.

As a positive biblical example, we can take the figure of Joseph, son of Jacob. Remember that he was sold as a slave by his brothers, who were jealous of him, and taken to Egypt. There, after a series of vicissitudes, he is freed, enters the service of the Pharaoh and becomes a sort of viceroy. Joseph does not behave like a master, but like a father: he cares for the country, and when famine strikes, he organizes the grain reserves for the common good, so much so that the Pharaoh says to the people: "Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do" (Gen 41:55) – the same phrase that Mary will say to the servants at the wedding in Cana, referring to Jesus. Joseph, who has suffered injustice personally, does not pursue his own interest, but that of the people, he pays personally for the common good, he makes himself an artisan of peace, he forges relationships capable of innovating society. As Don Lorenzo Milani wrote: "Others' problems are like mine. To come out of them together is good politics. To come out alone is stinginess".[1] It is like that, it is simple.

These two biblical examples, one negative, the other positive, help us understand what kind of spirituality can fuel politics. I will highlight just two aspects: tenderness and fruitfulness. Tenderness is "that love that draws near and becomes real. ... Tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women. Amid the daily concerns of political life, the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed they have a 'right' to appeal to our heart and soul" (Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, 194). Fruitfulness is made up of sharing, a long-term outlook, dialogue, trust, understanding, listening, time spent, answers ready and not deferred. It means looking to the future and investing in the future generations; undertaking processes rather than occupying spaces. This is the golden rule: is your activity to occupy a space for yourself? That will not do. For your group? That will not do either. Occupying spaces will not do: initiating processes will. Time is superior to space.

Dear friends, I would like to conclude by proposing the questions that every good politician should ask: "How much love did I put into my work? What did I do for the progress of our people? What mark did I leave on the life of society? What real bonds did I create? What positive forces did I unleash? How much social peace did I sow? What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?" (ibid., 197). Your concern should not be electoral consensus or personal success, but involving people, generating entrepreneurship, making dreams flourish, making people feel the beauty of belonging to a community. Participation is the balm on the wounds of democracy. I invite you to give your contribution, to participate and to invite your peers to do likewise, always with the purpose and style of service. The politician is a servant; when the politician is not a servant, he or she is a bad politician, not a politician.



**The Pope Video - MAY 2021:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/the-world-of-finance/>

**The Pope Video - April 2018:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/for-those-who-have-responsibility-in-economic-matters/>

**The Pope Video - October 2017:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/rights-of-workers-and-the-unemployed/>

**The Pope Video - April 2016:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/small-farmers/>



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FOR THE CRY OF THE EARTH

## SEPTEMBER

**“Let us pray that each of us listen with our hearts to the cry of the Earth and of the victims of environmental disasters and the climate crisis, making a personal commitment to care for the world we inhabit”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FORUM<sup>11</sup>

Francis

10 February 2023

[...] Unfortunately, we are witnessing an unprecedented social and environmental crisis. If we truly want to take care of our common home and improve the planet on which we live, it is essential to make profound changes in our lifestyles; it is essential to have models of production and consumption. We should listen to Indigenous Peoples more and learn from their way of life, so as to understand properly that we cannot continue to greedily devour natural resources, because “the Earth was entrusted to us in order that it be mother for us” — Mother Earth — “capable of giving to each one what is necessary to live” (Video Message for the Meeting of 500 national and international representatives: “Expo of Ideas 2015 — Toward the Milan Charter”, 7 February 2015). Therefore, the contribution of Indigenous Peoples is fundamental in the fight against climate change. And this has been scientifically proven.

Today, more than ever, there are many who demand a process of reconversion of the consolidated power structures that underpin the societies of western culture; these, at the same time, transform the historical relations marked by colonialism, exclusion and discrimination, giving rise to a renewed dialogue on the way in which we are building our future on the planet. We urgently need joint action, the fruit of sincere and constant collaboration, because the environmental challenge we are experiencing and its human roots have an impact on every one of us. Not only a physical impact, but also psychological and cultural.

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<sup>11</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/february/documents/20230210-forum-popoliindigeni.html>

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Therefore, I ask governments to recognize the Indigenous Peoples of the whole world, with their cultures, languages, traditions and spirituality, and to respect their dignity and their rights, in the knowledge that the richness of our great human family consists precisely in its diversity. I will return to this later.

Ignoring Indigenous communities in protecting the earth is a grave error — it is extractive functionalism — not to mention a great injustice. On the contrary, valuing their cultural heritage and their ancestral techniques will help to embark on pathways for better environmental management. In this regard, IFAD's work in assisting Indigenous communities in a process of autonomous development, primarily through the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF), is commendable, although these efforts must still be multiplied and accompanied by a more resolute and far-sighted decision-making process, in a just transition.

I would like to focus on two key words in this regard: good living or living well, and harmony.

Living well is not "pleasant idleness", the "dolce vita" of the "rarefied" bourgeoisie, no, no. It is living in harmony with nature, knowing how to create not equilibrium, no, more than equilibrium, harmony, which is superior to balance. Balance can be functional. Harmony is never functional; it is sovereign in itself.

Knowing how to move in harmony: this is what gives the wisdom we call living well. The harmony between a person and his or her community, the harmony between a person and the environment, the harmony between a person and all creation.

The wounds against this harmony are those that we are clearly seeing which destroy populations: extractivism, in the case of Amazonia, for example; deforestation; or in other places the extractivism of the mining industry.

So we must always strive for harmony. When people do not respect the well-being of the land, the well-being of the environment, the well-being of climate, the well-being of vegetation or the well-being of the fauna, when they do not respect this general well-being, they lapse into inhumane attitudes, because they lose contact with — I will say the word — Mother Earth. Not in a superstitious sense, but rather in the sense that [Mother Earth] is what gives us culture and this harmony. [...]

**The Pope Video - SEPTEMBER 2021:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/september-an-environmentally-sustainable-lifestyle/>

**The Pope Video - SEPTEMBER 2020:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/september-respect-for-the-planets-resources/>

**The Pope Video - September 2019:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/protecting-the-oceans-extended-edition/>

**The Pope Video - February 2016:**

<https://thepopevideo.org/care-for-creation/>

➤ 1st September - THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION



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FOR A SHARED MISSION

## OCTOBER

“Let us pray that the Church  
continue to sustain a  
synodal lifestyle in every  
way, as a sign of  
coresponsibility, promoting  
the participation,  
communion and mission  
shared by priests, religious  
and laity”

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE  
ORGANIZED BY THE DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY AND LIFE <sup>12</sup>  
Francis  
18 February 2023

[...] The title of your Conference speaks of a “call” to “move forward together”, thus setting the subject within the broader context of synodality. The path that God is indicating to the Church is precisely that of a more intense and concrete experience of communion and journeying together. He asks the Church to leave behind ways of acting separately, on parallel tracks that never meet. Clergy separated from laity, consecrated persons from clergy and the faithful; the intellectual faith of certain elites separated from the faith of ordinary people; the Roman Curia from the particular Churches, bishops from priests; young people from the elderly, spouses and families disengaged from the life of the communities, charismatic movements separated from parishes, and so forth. This is the worst temptation at the present moment. The Church still has a long way to go to live as a body, as a true people united by the same faith in Christ the Saviour, enlivened by the same Spirit of holiness and directed to the same mission of proclaiming the merciful love of God our Father.

This last aspect is critical: *a people united in mission*. This is the insight that we must always cherish: the Church is the *faithful holy People of God*, as [Lumen Gentium](#) affirms in nos. 8 and 12. The Church is neither populist nor elitist, but the faithful holy People of God. We cannot learn this theoretically, but through lived

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<sup>12</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2023/february/documents/20230218-convegno.html>

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experience. Only then may we seek to explain, as best we can; but if we do not live it we cannot explain it. A people united in mission, then. Synodality has its origin and ultimate purpose in mission: it is born of mission and directed to mission. Let us think of the earliest days, when Jesus sends the Apostles and they all return happy, for the demons “fled from them”: it was mission that brought about that sense of the Church. Sharing in mission brings pastors and laypersons closer together; it builds a unity of purpose, manifests the complementarity of the differing charisms and thus awakens in all the desire to move forward together. We see this illustrated in Jesus himself, who from the beginning surrounded himself with a group of disciples, men and women, and, with them, carried out his public ministry. Never alone. When he sent the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom of God, he sent them “two by two”. We see the same thing in Saint Paul, who always proclaimed the Gospel with co-workers, including laypersons and married couples. Not by himself. This has been the case at times of great renewal and missionary outreach in the Church’s history: pastors and faithful together. Not isolated individuals, but a people that evangelizes, the faithful holy People of God! [...]

### **The Pope Video - October 2022**

<https://thepopevideo.org/october-for-a-church-open-to-everyone/?lang=es>

### **The Pope Video - August 2021**

<https://thepopevideo.org/august-church-on-the-way/>

### **The Pope Video - October 2019**

<https://thepopevideo.org/missionary-spring-in-the-church/>

- **October 2021-2024 - Synod of Bishops**



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FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A  
CHILD

## NOVEMBER

**“Let us pray that all parents  
who mourn the loss of a son  
or daughter find support in  
their community, and may  
receive peace of heart from  
the Spirit of Consolation”**

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

GENERAL AUDIENCE<sup>13</sup>

Francis

17 June 2015

Death is an experience which touches all families, without exception. It is part of life; yet, where familial love is concerned, death never seems natural. For parents, surviving their own children is particularly heartbreaking; it contradicts the fundamental nature of the very relationships that give meaning to the family. The loss of a son or daughter is like time stopping altogether: it opens a chasm that swallows both past and future. Death, which takes away a little child or young person, is a blow to the promises, to the gifts and the sacrifices of love joyfully brought to the life we gave birth to. Frequently parents come to Mass at Santa Marta with the photo of a son, a daughter, a baby, a boy, a girl, and they say to me: “He’s gone, she’s gone”. And their faces are filled with grief. Death touches us and when it is a child’s, it touches us profoundly. The whole family is left paralyzed, speechless. And the child left alone by the loss of one or both parents suffers in a similar way. She asks: “Where is my daddy? Where is my mama? — Well, she is in heaven” — “Why can’t I see her?”. This question covers the agony in the heart of a child left alone. The emptiness of abandonment that opens up in him is made all the more agonizing by the fact that he doesn’t have the life-experience to even “give a name” to what has happened. “When is daddy coming back?” “When is mama coming?”. What do you say when a child suffers? This is what death in the family is like.

In these cases, death is like a black hole that opens up in the life of the family and for which we have no explanation. And at times we even go so far as to lay the blame on God. How many people — I understand them — get angry with God, blaspheme: “Why did you take my son, my daughter? There is no God, God does not exist! Why did he do this?”. We hear this so often. But this anger is basically what comes from the heart in great pain; the loss of a son or of a daughter, of a father or of a mother, is a great sorrow. This happens over and over in families. In these cases, I said, death is like a hole. But physical death has “accomplices” even worse than

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<sup>13</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150617\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150617_udienza-generale.html)

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itself, which are called hate, envy, pride, greed; in short, the sin of the world which works for death and makes it even more painful and unjust. Family bonds seem to be the predestined and helpless victims of these helping powers of death, trailing the history of mankind. Let us think of the absurd “normality” with which, at certain moments and in certain places, events adding to the horror of death are provoked by the hatred and indifference of other human beings. May the Lord keep us free from being accustomed to this!

In the People of God, by the grace of his compassion granted in Jesus, many families prove by their deeds that death does not have the last word: this is a true act of faith. Every time a family in mourning — even terrible mourning — finds the strength to guard the faith and love that unite us to those we love, it has already prevented death from taking everything. The darkness of death should be confronted with a more intense work of love. “My God, lighten my darkness!”, is the invocation of evening prayer. In the light of the Resurrection of the Lord, who abandons none of those whom the Father entrusted to him, we can take the “sting” out of death, as the Apostle Paul says (1 Cor 15:55); we can prevent it from poisoning life, from rendering vain our love, from pushing us into the darkest chasm.

In this faith, we can console one another, knowing that the Lord has conquered death once and for all. Our loved ones are not lost in the darkness of nothing: hope assures us that they are in the good and strong hands of God. Love is stronger than death. Thus, the way is to let love grow, make it stronger, and love will guard us until the day that every tear shall be wiped away, when “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more” (Rev 21:4). If we allow ourselves to be sustained by this faith, the experience of grief can generate even stronger family bonds, a new openness to the pain of other families, a new brotherhood with families that are born and reborn in hope. To be born and reborn in hope, this gives us faith. But I would like to stress the last phrase of the Gospel which he heard today (cf. Lk 7:11-15). After Jesus brought the young man, the only son of a widow, back to life, the Gospel says: “Jesus gave him back to his mother”. And this is our hope! All our loved ones who are gone, the Lord will give them back to us and we will be together with them. This hope does not disappoint! Let us remember well this action of Jesus: “And Jesus gave him back to his mother”, thus the Lord will do with all our loved ones in the family!

This faith protects us from the nihilist vision of death, as well as from the false consolations of the world, so that the Christian truth “does not risk mixing itself with myths of various types”, surrendering to superstitions beliefs ([Benedict XVI, \*Angelus\*, 2 November 2008](#)). Today it is necessary that Pastors and all Christians express in a more concrete way the meaning of the faith in regards to the family experience of grief. We should not deny them the right to weep — we must weep in mourning — “Jesus wept” and was “deeply troubled” by the grave loss of a family that he loved (cf. Jn 11:33-37). We can draw from the simple and strong testimony of the many families who have been able to grasp, in the most arduous transition of death, the safe passage of the Lord, Crucified and Risen, with his irrevocable promise of the resurrection of the dead. God's work of love is stronger than the work of death. It is of that love, it is precisely of that love, that we must make ourselves hard-working “accomplices”, with our faith! And let us remember Jesus' deed: “And Jesus gave him back to his mother”, so he will do with all our loved ones and with us when we meet again, when death will be definitively conquered in us. It was conquered by Jesus' Cross. Jesus will give us all back to the family!



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FOR PILGRIMS OF HOPE

## DECEMBER

“Let us pray that this Jubilee  
strengthen us in our faith,  
helping us to recognize the  
Risen Christ in the midst of  
our lives, transforming us  
into pilgrims of Christian  
hope”

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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

LETTER TO MSGR. RINO FISICHELLA,  
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION,  
FOR THE JUBILEE 2025<sup>14</sup>  
Francis  
11 February 2022

[...] We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, *Pilgrims of Hope*. This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity. Here I think in particular of the many refugees forced to abandon their native lands. May the voices of the poor be heard throughout this time of preparation for the Jubilee, which is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone. As the Bible teaches, “The sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you; for your cattle also, and for the beasts that are in your land, all its yield shall be for food” (*Lev 25:6-7*).

The spiritual dimension of the Jubilee, which calls for conversion, should also embrace these fundamental aspects of our life in society as part of a coherent whole. In the realization that all of us are pilgrims on this earth,

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<sup>14</sup> See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2022/documents/20220211-fisichella-giubileo2025.html>



which the Lord has charged us to till and keep (cf. *Gen 2:15*), may we never fail, in the course of our sojourn, to contemplate the beauty of creation and care for our common home. It is my hope that the coming Jubilee Year will be celebrated and experienced with this intention too. Growing numbers of men and women, including many young people and children, have come to realize that care for creation is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will. [...]

➤ **Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrims of Hope**