

## What does Pope Francis expect from parishes? Generous, open communities near to all

- *The new **Pope Video** calls parishes to truly be communities: places of listening and welcome whose doors are always open.*
- ***Pope Francis'** message places the accent on parishes functioning as “schools of service and generosity” where people can “find the gift of the sacraments.”*
- *At the same time, the **Holy Father** asks us to be “daring,” to be able to rethink “the style of our parochial communities.”*

(Vatican City, January 30, 2023) – The second [Pope Video](#) of the year has just been published with the prayer intention that the Holy Father is entrusting to the entire **Catholic Church** through the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#). This February, **Pope Francis**, with a smile, invites every parish to put a sign on their door saying, “Free Admission.” With these words he wants to remind all of us that there are no special requirements for entering, because “parishes are not a club for the few, which give a certain kind of social belonging.”

### **The riches of the Church**

The outside of a beautiful but empty parish church; then, the same church, but full of people, which thus becomes even more beautiful. Thus begins The Pope Video this month, reminding us that the riches of the Church are not in its buildings, but in the people who go there. Indeed, parishes in **Francis'** vision are “close-knit communities, without bureaucracy, people-centered —a place where the gift of the sacraments can be found.” The images, which come from parishes around the world, show get-togethers, talks, the distribution of aid to those most in need, visits to the elderly and the sick, pageants, and internal or external events. It's a video full of life, the life that flows in parishes and that continues to make them – in a world in which it's easier and easier to close in on oneself and which tends to prefer virtual places of encounter to in-person ones – reference points for many people, where they can learn the **art of encounter**.

### **The Church in the midst of the homes**

Already in the **Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium***, published at the beginning of his pontificate, **Francis** highlighted the centrality of the parish: “While certainly not the



only institution which evangelizes,” he wrote, quoting an expression of John Paul II in *Christifideles Iiaci*, parishes have the peculiarity of being “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.” This is why it should be “in contact with the homes and the lives of its people” and not become “a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few.” But this “call to review and renew our parishes,” he added, “has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people.”

### **Rethinking the parish style**

In this [Pope Video](#), the **Pope** insists on the idea of parishes continuing along this path of transformation, and being a center of welcome and listening: “They have to become once again schools of service and generosity, with their doors always open to those who are excluded. And to those included. To all.” We can succeed, he says, by being “daring”: rethinking “the style of our parochial communities” and “placing communion – communion of people, ecclesial communion – at the center.”

### **The people at the center**

**Fr. Frédéric Fornos S.J.**, the International Director of the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#), commented on this prayer intention: “A few years ago, **Francis** told the Italian diocese of Isernia-Venafro: ‘Every parish community is called to be a privileged place of listening and of proclaiming the **Gospel**; a house of prayer around the Eucharist; a true school of communion.’ Listening, prayer, and communion: these are essential synodal characteristics for parish life. But to do this, they need to really be communities, with the people at the center, because we are truly a community when we know each other, know each other’s names, needs, and voices. How often is it the case that parishes have become a group of more or less unfamiliar people who meet for Mass on Sunday, but without community life? It’s a great challenge. Being a Christian community is a grace, born from shared faith, from the lived experience of fraternity, and from welcoming those most in need; born from a shared spiritual experience, from an encounter with the Risen Jesus Christ. As **Francis** says in **The Pope Video**, “let us be daring” when it comes to listening to the Holy Spirit; “Let us all rethink the style of our parochial communities.”

*The Pope Video is possible thanks to the generous contributions of many people. You can donate by following [this link](#).*



*This month The Pope Video in English is available in two versions, both subtitled: one with the Holy Father's original voice, in Spanish, and a second one with the voice of Vatican Media journalists in English.*

Where can you watch the video?

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#### **About The Pope Video**

The Pope Video is an official global initiative with the purpose of disseminating the Holy Father's monthly prayer intentions. It is carried out by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). **Since the year 2016, The Pope Video has had more than 185 million views across all the Vatican's social networks, and is translated into more than 23 languages, receiving press coverage in 114 countries.** The videos are produced and created by the team of The Pope Video of the Prayer Network, coordinated by Andrea Sarubbi, with the support of La Machi Communication for Good Causes agency. The project is supported by [Vatican Media](#). More information at: [The Pope Video](#)

#### **About the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network**

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network is a Vatican foundation, with the mission of mobilizing Catholics through prayer and action in response to the challenges facing humanity and the mission of the Church. These challenges are presented in the form of prayer intentions entrusted by the Pope to the entire Church. The foundation's mission is inscribed in the dynamic of the Heart of Jesus, a mission of compassion for the world. It was founded in 1844 as the Apostleship of Prayer. It is present in 89 countries and is made up of more than 22 million Catholics. It includes a youth branch, the EYM: Eucharistic Youth Movement. In December 2020, the Pope constituted this pontifical work as a Vatican foundation and approved its new statutes. Its international director is Fr. Frédéric Fornos, SJ. For more information, visit: <https://www.popesprayer.va>

#### **PRESS CONTACT**

[press@thepopevideo.org](mailto:press@thepopevideo.org)

+34 633 32 33 29

+39 06 69 868 383