

Pope Francis: “If we don’t respect women, our society will not progress”

- In [The Pope Video](#) for April, **Pope Francis** lifts up his prayer “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.”
- “Let us respect women. Let us respect their dignity, their basic rights. And if we don’t, our society will not progress,” the **Pope** affirms in the message he addresses to us through the [Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network](#).
- In his monthly intention, **Pope Francis** asks that governments be committed “to eliminate discriminatory laws everywhere and to work toward guaranteeing women’s human rights.”

(Vatican City, 2 April 2024) – **Pope Francis** once again dedicates his monthly prayer intention to women. In [The Pope Video](#) for April, which he has entrusted to the [Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network](#), the Holy Father insists on the steps today’s society needs to take, and asks Christians to join him in prayer “**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.**”

Pope Francis’ denunciation

An Asian woman with tears in her eyes, another behind a fence with a sad look on her face, a group of victims of rape being kicked out of their village, teenagers standing in line for genital mutilation – this video accompanying Pope Francis’ prayer intention opens with strong images in sync with **the Pope’s moving denunciation**. His message exposes the huge gap that exists between declared principles and actual practice (“In theory, we all agree that men and women have the same dignity as persons. But this does not play out in practice”).

The Pope himself provides concrete examples, citing “discriminatory laws” currently in force: mandatory dress codes, impediments to ongoing education, denial of assistance for job opportunities. And he recalls that “in many countries, genital mutilation is still practiced.” Thus, **he states that “governments need to**



commit to eliminate” this discrimination and “work toward guaranteeing women’s human rights.” He asks us all to respect women, who unfortunately continue to be treated “like something to get rid of”, and who are often victims of violence and abuse in many parts of the world, even in countries claiming to be more advanced. “And if we don’t [respect women],” the Pope adds, “our society will not progress.”

Unfortunately, contradictions are not lacking in today’s world. Whereas in some countries, women have access to education and employment, and occupy leadership roles in businesses and organizations, **many still do not enjoy the same opportunities as men.** Just think of the job market: less than one in two women in the world work and women earn 23% less than men. The same goes for education, when we consider that women who are literate are in the minority in some countries. For example, the rate is 23%; in Niger, 27%. Fewer opportunities translate into enormous economic difficulties. According to UN Women, it is estimated that by 2030 8% of women and girls will live in extreme poverty, and 25% of women will not have enough to eat.

Man and women, equal in dignity

Respect for the dignity of every person is a central tenet of Christianity since the life of each person is sacred, having been created in God’s image (see Genesis 1:26-27).

The topic of the role of women resounded in the **XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops’** Synthesis Report that took place in October of last year. “We are created, male and female, in the image and likeness of God. From the beginning, creation manifests unity and difference, bestowing on women and men a shared nature, calling, and destiny, and two distinct experiences of being human.... We have had a very positive experience of the reciprocity between women and men during this Assembly. Together we echo the call made in the previous phases of the synodal process, that the Church adopt a more decisive commitment to understand and accompany women from a pastoral and sacramental point of view,” the synod participants state in the document.

Heroines of all times

Father Frédéric Fornos S.J., International Director of the [Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network](#), recalls that “from the beginning, Jesus welcomed women as his



disciples. This was a novelty in the society of that time. As the Gospels testify, Jesus' mother Mary held a prominent place among the Apostles and in the early community. Jesus entrusted the mission of announcing his resurrection to his brothers to a woman, Mary Magdalene. Throughout history, women have contributed to the spiritual dynamism in the Church: Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Thérèse of Lisieux, who are Doctors of the Church, and countless other saints. As the Pope calls us to pray this month **'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,'** let us also continue to recognize women's role in the Church. Primary observation: If the Christian community were a business, without the active participation of women, it would go bankrupt."

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

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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 2016, The Pope Video has had more than 221 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 Pope Video Prayer Network team, coordinated by Andrea Sarubbi, and distributed by La Machi Communication for Good Causes. The project is sponsored by [Vatican Media](#). More information: [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. 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 Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM). 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>

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