



CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT HUMANITY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH • 2021 •

PRAYER INTENTION FOR
EVANGELIZATION

JANUARY

“May the Lord give us the
grace to live in full
fellowship with our brothers
and sisters of other
religions, praying for one
another, open to all”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

A DOCUMENT ON HUMAN FRATERNITY
FOR WORLD PEACE AND LIVING TOGETHER¹
Francis
4 February 2019

Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.

This transcendental value served as the starting point for several meetings characterized by a friendly and fraternal atmosphere where we shared the joys, sorrows and problems of our contemporary world. We did this by considering scientific and technical progress, therapeutic achievements, the digital era, the mass media and

¹ See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html

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communications. We reflected also on the level of poverty, conflict and suffering of so many brothers and sisters in different parts of the world as a consequence of the arms race, social injustice, corruption, inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, extremism and many other causes.

From our fraternal and open discussions, and from the meeting that expressed profound hope in a bright future for all human beings, the idea of this Document on Human Fraternity was conceived. It is a text that has been given honest and serious thought so as to be a joint declaration of good and heartfelt aspirations. It is a document that invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters. [...]



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

FEBRUARY

“We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

HOMILY ON THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD²

Francis

1st January 2020

Born of woman. The rebirth of humanity began from a woman. Women are sources of life. Yet they are continually insulted, beaten, raped, forced to prostitute themselves and to suppress the life they bear in the womb. Every form of violence inflicted upon a woman is a blasphemy against God, who was born of a woman. Humanity's salvation came forth from the body of a woman: we can understand our degree of humanity by how we treat a woman's body. How often are women's bodies sacrificed on the profane altars of advertising, of profiteering, of pornography, exploited like a canvas to be used. Yet women's bodies must be freed from consumerism; they must be respected and honoured. Theirs is the most noble flesh in the world, for it conceived and brought to light the love that has saved us! In our day, too, motherhood is demeaned, because the only growth that interests us is economic growth. There are mothers who risk difficult journeys desperately seeking to give a better future to the fruit of their womb, yet are deemed redundant by people with full stomachs but hearts empty of love.

² See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200101_omelia-madredidio-pace.html

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POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

AMORIS LAETITIA³

Francis

19 March 2016

54. In this brief overview, I would like to stress the fact that, even though significant advances have been made in the recognition of women's rights and their participation in public life, in some countries much remains to be done to promote these rights. Unacceptable customs still need to be eliminated. I think particularly of the shameful ill-treatment to which women are sometimes subjected, domestic violence and various forms of enslavement which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union. I think of the reprehensible genital mutilation of women practiced in some cultures, but also of their lack of equal access to dignified work and roles of decision-making. History is burdened by the excesses of patriarchal cultures that considered women inferior, yet in our own day, we cannot overlook the use of surrogate mothers and "the exploitation and commercialization of the female body in the current media culture".

[42] There are those who believe that many of today's problems have arisen because of feminine emancipation. This argument, however, is not valid, "it is false, untrue, a form of male chauvinism".

[43] The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear, and within families there is a growing reciprocity. If certain forms of feminism have arisen which we must consider inadequate, we must nonetheless see in the women's movement the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women.

³ See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html

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PRAYER INTENTION FOR
EVANGELIZATION

MARCH

“Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

PENITENTIAL CELEBRATION - HOMILY⁴

Francis

29 March 2019

[...] Confession is the passage from misery to mercy; it is God's writing upon the heart. There – in our hearts – we constantly read that we are precious in the eyes of God, that he is our Father and that he loves us even more than we love ourselves.

“The two of them alone remained: mercy with misery”. Those two, alone. How many times do we feel alone, that we have lost our way in life. How many times do we no longer know how to begin again, overwhelmed by the effort to accept ourselves. We need to start over, but we don't know where to begin. Christians are born from the forgiveness they receive in Baptism. They are always reborn from the same place: from the surprising forgiveness of God, from his mercy which restores us. Only by being forgiven can we set out again with fresh confidence, after having experienced the joy of being loved by the Father to the full. Only through God's forgiveness do truly new things happen within us. Let us hear again words the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah: “Behold, I am doing a new thing” (Is 43:19). Forgiveness gives us a new beginning, makes us new creatures, helps us take hold of a new life. God's forgiveness is not a photocopy which is identically reproduced in every passage through the confessional. Receiving pardon for our sins through a priest is always a new, distinctive and unique experience. We pass from being alone with our miseries and accusers, like the woman in the Gospel, to being raised up and encouraged by the Lord who grants us a new start.

⁴ See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190329_omelia-penitenza.html

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"The two of them alone remained: mercy with misery". What do we need to do to come to love mercy, to overcome the fear of Confession? Let us accept once more the invitation of Isaiah: "Do you not perceive it?" (Is 43:19). It is important to perceive God's forgiveness. It would be beautiful, after Confession, to remain like that woman, our eyes fixed on Jesus who has just set us free: no longer looking at our miseries, but rather at his mercy. To look at the Crucified One and say with amazement: "That's where my sins ended up. You took them upon yourself. You didn't point your finger at me; instead, you opened your arms and forgave me once again". It is important to be mindful of God's forgiveness, to remember his tender love, and taste again and again the peace and freedom we have experienced. For this is the heart of Confession: not the sins we declare, but the divine love we receive, of which we are ever in need. We may still have a doubt: "Confessing is useless, I am always committing the same sins". The Lord knows us, however; he knows that the interior struggle is difficult, that we are weak and inclined to fall, that we often relapse into doing what is wrong. So he proposes that we begin to relapse into goodness, into asking for mercy. He will raise us up and make us new creatures. Let us start over, then, from Confession, let us restore to this sacrament the place it deserves in life and pastoral ministry!

"The two of them alone remained: mercy with misery". Today, in Confession, we too draw life from this saving encounter: we with our miseries and sins, and the Lord who knows us, loves us and frees us from evil. Let us enter into this encounter, asking for the grace to rediscover its saving power.



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

APRIL

"We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis."



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

MESSAGE TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

"HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: ACHIEVEMENTS, OMISSIONS, NEGATIONS"⁵

Francis

10 December 2018

[...] By closely observing our contemporary societies, one observes numerous contradictions that lead one to wonder whether the equal dignity of all human beings, solemnly proclaimed 70 years ago, is truly recognized, respected, protected and promoted in every circumstance. In the world today numerous forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model, which does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings.^[4] While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights disregarded or violated. [...]

Faced with these grave phenomena, we are all accountable. Indeed, when fundamental rights are violated, or when some are favoured to the detriment of others, or when they are guaranteed only to specified groups, then serious injustices occur, which in their turn feed conflicts with heavy consequences both within single Nations and in relations among them.

Therefore, each person is called to contribute with courage and determination, in line with the specificity of his or her proper role, to the respect of the fundamental rights of every person, especially of those who are 'invisible': of the many who are hungry and thirsty, who are naked, sick, strangers or prisoners (cf. Mt 25:35-35), who live at the margins of society or who are discarded from it.

⁵ See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20181210_messaggio-diritti-umani.html

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This demand for justice and solidarity assumes a special significance for us Christians, because the Gospel itself invites us to direct our gaze toward the least of our brothers and sisters, to be moved with compassion (cf. Mt 14:14) and to commit ourselves concretely in order to alleviate their suffering.

I would like, on this occasion, to address a heartfelt appeal to those who have institutional responsibilities, asking them to place human rights at the centre of all policies, including those of cooperating in development, even when this means going against the current.



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

MAY

“Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate financial markets and protect citizens from its dangers.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

ENCYCLICAL LETTER⁶

LAUDATO SI'

Francis

24 May 2015

109. [...] The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings. Finance overwhelms the real economy. The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and argue, in popular and non-technical terms, that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth. They are less concerned with certain economic theories which today scarcely anybody dares defend, than with their actual operation in the functioning of the economy. They may not affirm such theories with words, but nonetheless support them with their deeds by showing no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations. Their behaviour shows that for them maximizing profits is enough. Yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion.^[89] At the same time, we have “a sort of ‘superdevelopment’ of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation”,^[90] while we are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with the direction, goals, meaning and social implications of technological and economic growth.

⁶ See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

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189. Politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy. Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life. Saving banks at any cost, making the public pay the price, foregoing a firm commitment to reviewing and reforming the entire system, only reaffirms the absolute power of a financial system, a power which has no future and will only give rise to new crises after a slow, costly and only apparent recovery. The financial crisis of 2007-08 provided an opportunity to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles, and new ways of regulating speculative financial practices and virtual wealth. But the response to the crisis did not include rethinking the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world. Production is not always rational, and is usually tied to economic variables which assign to products a value that does not necessarily correspond to their real worth. This frequently leads to an overproduction of some commodities, with unnecessary impact on the environment and with negative results on regional economies. [133] The financial bubble also tends to be a productive bubble. The problem of the real economy is not confronted with vigour, yet it is the real economy which makes diversification and improvement in production possible, helps companies to function well, and enables small and medium businesses to develop and create employment.



PRAYER INTENTION FOR EVANGELIZATION

JUNE

“Let us pray for young people who are preparing for marriage with the support of a Christian community: may they grow in love, with generosity, faithfulness and patience.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE FORMATION COURSE PROMOTED
BY THE TRIBUNAL OF THE ROMAN ROTA⁷

Francis

27 September 2018

[...] Marriage is not merely a ‘social’ event but a true Sacrament that entails an appropriate preparation and an informed celebration. The marriage bond, in fact, requires the engaged couple to make a conscious choice that confirms their willingness to build up and strengthen the bond that can never be betrayed or abandoned. In the different Dioceses of the world, initiatives are being developed to make pastoral care of the family — which means, first and foremost, accompanying engaged couples toward marriage — better adapted to the real situation. It is important to offer engaged couples the opportunity to participate in seminars and prayer retreats which involve as animators, in addition to priests, also married couples with solid family experience, and experts in psychological disciplines.

Quite often, the very root of problems that come to light after the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is to be found not only in a latent and unsuspected immaturity that suddenly explodes, but especially in the weakness of Christian faith and the absence of accompaniment from the Church, in the solitude in which young spouses are generally left after the wedding. Only when they are faced with everyday life together, which calls spouses to grow on a journey of giving and sacrifice, do some realize that they had not fully understood what they were about to begin. And they find themselves unprepared, especially when faced with the magnitude

⁷ See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/september/documents/papa-francesco_20180927_corso-rotaromana.html

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and meaning of Christian marriage with regard to the practical implications linked to the indissolubility of the bond, to being open to pass on the gift of life, and to fidelity.



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

JULY

“We pray that, in social, economic and political situations of conflict, we may be courageous and passionate architects of dialogue and friendship.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

CHRISTUS VIVIT⁸

Francis

25 March 2019

169. I ask young people to go beyond their small groups and to build “social friendship, where everyone works for the common good. Social enmity, on the other hand, is destructive. Families are destroyed by enmity. Countries are destroyed by enmity. The world is destroyed by enmity. And the greatest enmity of all is war. Today we see that the world is destroying itself by war... So find ways of building social friendship”.^[90] It is not easy, it always means having to give something up and to negotiate, but if we do it for the sake of helping others, we can have the magnificent experience of setting our differences aside and working together for something greater. If, as a result of our own simple and at times costly efforts, we can find points of agreement amid conflict, build bridges and make peace for the benefit of all, then we will experience the miracle of the culture of encounter. This is something which young people can dare to pursue with passion.

183. Dear young friends, do not let them exploit your youth to promote a shallow life that confuses beauty with appearances. [...] There is also a beauty, unrelated to appearances or fashionable dress, in all those men and women who pursue their personal vocation with love, in selfless service of community or nation, in the hard work of building a happy family, in the selfless and demanding effort to advance social harmony. To find, to disclose and to highlight this beauty, which is like that of Christ on the cross, is to lay the foundations of genuine social solidarity and the culture of encounter.

⁸ See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html

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PRAYER INTENTION FOR
EVANGELIZATION

AUGUST

**“Let us pray for the Church,
that She may receive from
the Holy Spirit the grace and
strength to reform herself in
the light of the Gospel.”**



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

ESORTAZIONE APOSTOLICA
EVANGELII GAUDIUM⁹

Francis

24 November 2013

26. Paul VI invited us to deepen the call to renewal and to make it clear that renewal does not only concern individuals but the entire Church. Let us return to a memorable text which continues to challenge us. “The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being... This vivid and lively self-awareness inevitably leads to a comparison between the ideal image of the Church as Christ envisaged her and loved her as his holy and spotless bride (cf. Eph 5:27), and the actual image which the Church presents to the world today... This is the source of the Church’s heroic and impatient struggle for renewal: the struggle to correct those flaws introduced by her members which her own self-examination, mirroring her exemplar, Christ, points out to her and condemns” [23] The Second Vatican Council presented ecclesial conversion as openness to a constant self-renewal born of fidelity to Jesus Christ: “Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling... Christ summons the Church as she goes her pilgrim way... to that continual reformation of which she always has need, in so far as she is a human institution here on earth”. [24]

There are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelization, yet even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them. Without new life and an authentic evangelical spirit, without the Church’s “fidelity to her own calling”, any new structure will soon prove ineffective.

27. I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures

⁹ See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

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demanding by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion". [25]



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

SEPTEMBER

“We pray that we all will make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, rejoicing in our young people who are resolutely committed to this.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

MESSAGE FOR THE
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION¹⁰

Francis

1st September 2019

It is also a season to reflect on our lifestyles, and how our daily decisions about food, consumption, transportation, use of water, energy and many other material goods, can often be thoughtless and harmful. Too many of us act like tyrants with regard to creation. Let us make an effort to change and to adopt more simple and respectful lifestyles! Now is the time to abandon our dependence on fossil fuels and move, quickly and decisively, towards forms of clean energy and a sustainable and circular economy. Let us also learn to listen to indigenous peoples, whose age-old wisdom can teach us how to live in a better relationship with the environment.

This too is a season for undertaking prophetic actions. Many young people all over the world are making their voices heard and calling for courageous decisions. They feel let down by too many unfulfilled promises, by commitments made and then ignored for selfish interests or out of expediency. The young remind us that the earth is not a possession to be squandered, but an inheritance to be handed down. They remind us that hope for tomorrow is not a noble sentiment, but a task calling for concrete actions here and now. We owe them real answers, not empty words, actions not illusions.

¹⁰ See full message:

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190901_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html

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PRAYER INTENTION FOR
EVANGELIZATION

OCTOBER

“We pray that every baptized person may be engaged in evangelization, available to the mission, by being witnesses of a life that has the flavour of the Gospel.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

MESSAGE FOR WORLD MISSION DAY 2019¹¹

Francis

9 June 2019

The Church is on mission in the world. Faith in Jesus Christ enables us to see all things in their proper perspective, as we view the world with God's own eyes and heart. Hope opens us up to the eternal horizons of the divine life that we share. Charity, of which we have a foretaste in the sacraments and in fraternal love, impels us to go forth to the ends of the earth (cf. Mic 5:4; Mt 28:19; Acts 1:8; Rom 10:18). A Church that presses forward to the farthest frontiers requires a constant and ongoing missionary conversion. How many saints, how many men and women of faith, witness to the fact that this unlimited openness, this going forth in mercy, is indeed possible and realistic, for it is driven by love and its deepest meaning as gift, sacrifice and gratuitousness (cf. 2 Cor 5:14-21)! The man who preaches God must be a man of God (cf. Maximum Illud).

This missionary mandate touches us personally: I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission. People in love never stand still: they are drawn out of themselves; they are attracted and attract others in turn; they give themselves to others and build relationships that are life-giving. As far as God's love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant. Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God's love. Even if parents can betray their love by lies, hatred and infidelity, God never takes back his gift of life. From eternity he has destined each of his children to share in his divine and eternal life (cf. Eph 1:3-6).

[...] Today too, the Church needs men and women who, by virtue of their baptism, respond generously to the call to leave behind home, family, country, language and local Church, and to be sent forth to the nations, to a world not yet transformed by the sacraments of Jesus Christ and his holy Church. By proclaiming God's word,

¹¹ See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/papa-francesco_20190609_giornata-missionaria2019.html

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bearing witness to the Gospel and celebrating the life of the Spirit, they summon to conversion, baptize and offer Christian salvation, with respect for the freedom of each person and in dialogue with the cultures and religions of the peoples to whom they are sent. The *missio ad gentes*, which is always necessary for the Church, thus contributes in a fundamental way to the process of ongoing conversion in all Christians. Faith in the Easter event of Jesus; the ecclesial mission received in baptism; the geographic and cultural detachment from oneself and one's own home; the need for salvation from sin and liberation from personal and social evil: all these demand the mission that reaches to the very ends of the earth.



UNIVERSAL PRAYER INTENTION

NOVEMBER

“We pray that people who suffer from depression or burn-out will find support and a light that opens them up to life.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

ANGELUS¹²

Francis

9 July 2017

[...] The Lord knows how arduous life can be. He knows that many things weary the heart: disappointments and wounds of the past, burdens to carry and wrongs to bear in the present, uncertainties and worries about the future.

In the face of all this, Jesus' first word is an invitation, a call to move and respond: "Come". The mistake, when things go wrong, is to stay where we are, lying there. It seems obvious, but how difficult it is to respond and open ourselves! It is not easy. In dark times it feels natural to keep to ourselves, to ruminate over how unfair life is, over how ungrateful others are, how mean the world is, and so on. We all know it. We have had this awful experience a few times. But in this way, locked up inside ourselves, we see everything as grim. Then we even grow accustomed to sadness, which becomes like home: that sadness overcomes us; this sadness is a terrible thing. Jesus, however, wants to pull us out of this "quicksand" and thus says to each one: "Come! — Who? — You, you, you". The way out is in connecting, in extending a hand and lifting our gaze to those who truly love us.

In fact it is not enough to come out of ourselves; it is important to know where to go. Because many aims are illusory: they promise comfort and distract just a little; they guarantee peace and offer amusement, then leave us with the loneliness there was before; they are "fireworks". Therefore Jesus indicates where to go: "Come to me". And many times, in the face of a burden of life or a situation that saddens us, we try to talk about it with someone who listens to us, with a friend, with an expert.... This is a great thing to do, but let us not forget Jesus. Let us not forget to open ourselves to him and to recount our life to him, to entrust people and situations to him. Perhaps there are "areas" of our life that we have never opened up to him and which have remained dark, because they have never seen the Lord's light. Each of us has our own story. And if someone has this dark

¹² See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2017/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20170709.html

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area, seek out Jesus; go to a missionary of mercy; go to a priest; go.... But go to Jesus, and tell Jesus about this. Today he says to each one: "Take courage; do not give in to life's burdens; do not close yourself off in the face of fears and sins. Come to me!".

He awaits us; he always awaits us. Not to magically resolve problems, but to strengthen us amid our problems. Jesus does not lift the burdens from our life, but the anguish from our heart; he does not take away our cross, but carries it with us. And with him every burden becomes light (cf. v. 30), because he is the comfort we seek.

When Jesus enters life, peace arrives, the kind that remains even in trials, in suffering. Let us go to Jesus; let us give him our time; let us encounter him each day in prayer, in a trusting and personal dialogue; let us become familiar with his Word; let us fearlessly rediscover his forgiveness; let us eat of his Bread of Life: we will feel loved; we will feel comforted by him.



PRAYER INTENTION FOR
EVANGELIZATION

DECEMBER

“Let us pray for the catechists, summoned to announce the Word of God: may they be its witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.”



PRAYER INTENTION COMMENTARY

VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON
“THE CATECHIST, WITNESS TO THE MYSTERY”
ORGANIZED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION¹³
Francis
22 September 2018

[...] "Be catechists, don't just work as catechists: this doesn't work! I work as a catechist because I like to teach. But if you are not a catechist, this doesn't work. You will not be fruitful; you will not be fruitful! Being a catechist is a vocation: being a catechist is a vocation, not working as a catechist. Pay attention, I did not say working as a catechist, but to be one, because it involves life. It leads to an encounter with Jesus through words and life, through testimony. [...]"

I often think of the catechist as one who has put himself at the service of God's word, who frequents this word daily to make it his nourishment and to share it with others effectively and credibly. The catechist knows that this word is "alive" (Heb 4:12) because it constitutes the rule of the Church's faith (cf. Conc. Ecum. Vat. II, *Dei Verbum*, 21; *Lumen Gentium*, 15). Consequently, the catechist cannot forget, especially today in a context of religious indifference, that his word is always a first proclamation. Think about it: in this world, in this era of so much indifference, your word will always be a first proclamation, which comes to touch the hearts and minds of many people who are waiting to meet Christ. Even without knowing it, they are waiting for him. And when I say the first announcement I do not mean this only in the temporal sense. Of course, this is important, but it is not always most important. The first announcement means underlining that Jesus Christ, who died and rose through the love of the Father, gives his forgiveness to all without distinction of persons, if only they open their hearts to let themselves be converted! Often we do not perceive the power of grace which, through our words, reaches

¹³ © Translation by Fr. Robert Hurd, SJ



our interlocutors profoundly and moulds them so that they can discover God's love. The catechist is not a teacher or a lecturer who thinks he is giving a lesson. Catechesis is not a lesson; catechesis is the communication of an experience and the witness of a faith that sets hearts on fire, because it introduces the desire to find Christ. This announcement in various ways and with different languages is always the "first" that the catechist is called to give!