



The Holy See

INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THE POPE'S WORLDWIDE PRAYER NETWORK

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 28 June 2019*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for this visit! I welcome this opportunity to renew my gratitude to you for your commitment to prayer and to the apostolate in favour of the mission of the Church. I thank you for the testimonies, which I have read, otherwise I would not have understood the one in Chinese! And thus I will respond, more or less, or continue to take up all of your reflections. Your service is more necessary than ever, as it emphasizes the primacy of God in people's lives, fostering communion in the Church.

1. *Fr Matthew*, who works in *Taiwan*, has offered us interesting information about the version of *Click to Pray* in Chinese. It is nice to know that, aside from their difficulties of a different nature, the Chinese can feel truly united in prayer, finding in it valid support in knowing and in witnessing to the Gospel. Prayer always kindles feelings of fraternity, breaks down barriers, goes beyond borders, creates invisible but real and efficient bridges, opens horizons of hope.

2. *Marie Dominique* told us about the mission of the Apostleship of Prayer in *France*, where this organization sprang up 175 years ago. We understand from her testimony that prayer intentions render Jesus' mission in the world concrete. Through her prayer network and the intentions that she entrusts to it each month, the Church speaks to the hearts of the men and women of our time. All of us, pastors, consecrated and lay faithful, are called to immerse ourselves in the concrete matters of the people who are next to us, above all by praying for them, sharing in prayer their joys and their sufferings. This is how we will respond to the call of Jesus who asks us to open our

hearts to brothers and sisters, especially to those who are tried in body and in spirit. It is important to speak about our brothers and sisters, but there are two ways to speak of brothers and sisters or to bless brothers and sisters: namely, to speak well of brothers and sisters, or otherwise to gossip, to speak ill of them. Idle talk — in this sense — is something bad; it is not Jesus' way. Jesus never gossiped. But speaking, yes. And prayer is speaking to Jesus about our brothers and sisters, saying: "Lord, for this problem, for this difficulty, for this situation...". And this path leads to union, to community. Instead, speaking ill of others is a path to destruction.

3. It is good, on this day of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to remember the foundation of our mission, as *Bettina* (from *Argentina*) did. It is a mission of compassion for the world; we could say a 'journey of the heart', that is, a prayerful itinerary that transforms people's lives. The Heart of Jesus is so great that it seeks to welcome all of us into the revolution of tenderness. Closeness to the Heart of the Lord urges our heart to lovingly draw near to a brother or sister, and helps us assume this compassion for the world. We are called to be witnesses to and messengers of God's mercy, to offer the world a perspective of light where there are shadows, of hope where despair reigns, of salvation where sin abounds. To engage in prayer is to enter Jesus' heart with my own heart, to make a path within Jesus' heart, feel what Jesus feels, Jesus' feelings of compassion, and also to explore my own heart in order to change my heart in this relationship with the heart of Jesus.

4. The testimony of *Sister Selam* (from *Ethiopia*) with the young people of the Eucharistic Youth Movement helps us to contemplate the Holy Spirit's action in that land. It is important to help the new generations to grow in friendship with Jesus through the intimate encounter with him in prayer, in listening to his Word, approaching the Eucharist in order to be a gift of love to our neighbour. Personal or community prayer spurs us to expend ourselves in spreading the Gospel and urges us to seek the good of others. We must offer young people occasions of inner reflection, moments of spirituality, schools of the Word, so that they may be passionate missionaries in various settings. In this way they will discover that praying does not separate them from real life, but helps them to interpret existential events in the light of God. Teach children how to pray. It saddens me when I see so many children who do not even know how to make the sign of the Cross. I say: "Make the sign of the Cross", and they do this [*making a vague gesture*]. They do not know. Teach children how to pray. Because they immediately reach Jesus' heart, immediately. Jesus wants them. And teach young people that prayer is a great journey in order to move forward in life. Thank you, Sister, for what you do. Thank you.

5. I enjoyed hearing Diego's (from *Guatemala*) enthusiasm in promoting the encounter between grandparents and grandchildren in praying for peace in the world and for the great challenges that mankind faces today. In the Pope's Prayer Network different generations meet; it is nice to think how grandparents can set an example for young people, by showing them how to take the path of prayer. The wisdom of the elderly, their experience and *capacity to 'reason' with the heart*. Someone might say: "But Father, we reason with the head!". No, it is not true: we reason with the

head and with the heart; it is an ability that we must develop. The capacity to reason with the heart. And these experiences of the elderly are a precious lesson in order to learn a fruitful methodology in the prayer of intercession. This is a great prayer, that of intercession: “Lord, I ask you for this, I ask you for that...”. Interceding is what Jesus does in heaven, because the Bible tells us that Jesus is before the Father and intercedes for us; he is our intercessor, and we must imitate Jesus; we must be intercessors. Throughout history, the greatest men and women of God have been great intercessors like Jesus. Intercede.

6. Lastly, a thank-you to *Fr Antonio (from Portugal)* for his testimony. He told us how the Apostleship of Prayer, by entering the digital world, brings elderly and young people close, helping them give new vitality to the traditional apostolate of prayer. It is essential that the Church’s mission adapt to the times and use the modern tools that technology places at our disposal. It is a matter of entering the modern-day Areopagi in order to proclaim the mercy and goodness of God. It is important to be attentive, however, to use these means, especially the Internet, without becoming slaves to the means. It is essential to avoid becoming hostages to a network that catches us, instead of ‘catching fish’, that is, attracting souls in order to lead them to the Lord.

I renew to each one of you my sincere gratitude for your valuable work, which flows from a heart truly attentive to others. The Apostleship of Prayer, the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network and in communion with him, reminds us that the heart of the Church’s mission is prayer. Be mindful: the heart of the Church’s mission is prayer. We can do so many things, but without prayer it does not work. The heart is prayer. I encourage you to persevere with joy in knowing the importance and necessity of your work. You help people to have a spiritual gaze, to view the reality that surrounds them in the light of faith, in order to recognize what God himself is working in them: it is a great gaze of hope! Thank you very much!

I would also like to thank the Society of Jesus. It is said that Jesuits are intellectuals, thinkers... But the Jesuits created this prayer network. Jesuits are men who pray, and this is great. And then, in a special way, I would like to thank Fr Fornos for his dedication and creativity: thank you, brother!

Now let us all spend a moment together in prayer, in order to mark the importance of this and in order to intercede, everyone turning to Jesus together. Firstly, let us do so in silence, everyone, each one in heartfelt prayer. [*silent prayer*] ... [*Prayer of the Worldwide Prayer Network*]

And now let us pray for the intentions that I proposed for the entire Church for the month[s] of [June and] July:

Let us pray that priests, through the modesty and humility of their lives, commit themselves actively, above all, to solidarity with those who are most poor. Let us say all together: “Let us pray”. And let us recite the prayer silently.

Let us pray that all those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word. Let us pray.

[Our Father and blessing]