

Offering everything to Christ

Pope Francis' prayer intentions for the months ahead bring all who pray with him closer to the heart of Christ, says **David Stewart SJ**.



Two years on, apostles of prayer worldwide still recall Pope Francis' words to us at our 175th anniversary gathering in Rome. Addressing delegates and directors from most of the 98 countries where his Prayer Network is active, he reminded us that 'the heart of the Church's

mission is prayer'. Whenever we pray the month's intention with him, we are therefore placing ourselves at the mission's heart, filled to overflowing, as Christ's heart is, with compassion for all of creation.

Praying a daily offering each morning, a long-honoured practice since the earliest days of the Apostleship of Prayer, is how we bless the new day, offering everything we do, everyone we meet, to Christ. We want to put ourselves and our hearts beside the compassionate heart of Jesus. By remembering in our morning offering the issues facing humanity that the Holy Father presents to us each month, we will begin to see ways that we can turn our faith into action.

Let's look at the intentions that Pope Francis asks us to pray, with him, in the next few months. As we do so, we can keep in mind how important human fraternity has become in his teaching and guidance of the Church. His call in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, that the 'effort to build a more just society implies the capacity of fraternity, a spirit of human communion', continues to inspire the followers of Christ, as we consider, with the pope, the challenges that face humanity and the Church's mission.

In July, we can take social friendship into our prayer, seeking the courage and enthusiasm that is needed to build friendships and develop dialogue. Such is the polarisation and conflict all around us,

dialogue and friendship are as difficult to build as they are necessary.

For August's intention the pope asks for prayers directly for the Church, directly to the Holy Spirit. Let's pray with him throughout August that the people of God, which means the whole Church, all of us, will focus on the values of the gospel.

Then in September, to coincide with the Season of Creation, we will join the Holy Father's prayer for the choices we need to make to our lifestyles to rescue our common home, following the example of the young. We should pray also for the COP26 conference, later in the year.

October sees a return to one of the pope's prominent messages, that we strive to become ready and willing missionary disciples. Everyone can be one, no matter what their station in life is – we evangelise by how we lead our lives.

INTENTIONS FOR THIS PERIOD

JULY *Social friendship:*

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

AUGUST *The Church:*

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.

SEPTEMBER *An environmentally sustainable lifestyle:*

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.

OCTOBER *Missionary disciples:*

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.

FIND OUT MORE

The Pope's Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer) has a new website for England, Wales and Scotland. There's a new mailing list that you can join – click the button on the site. We won't bombard you with mailings! Discover the many ways in which you can become an Apostle of Prayer and order some of our prayer cards and materials. www.praywiththepope.net