

LIVING LIFE *to the full*

Pope Leo's intentions for the months ahead put **Fr Paul Nicholson SJ** in mind of the fullness of life that Jesus promised, as we pray in gratitude for what we have received and in petition for those in need.

I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full.' These words of Jesus, recorded in John's Gospel, could be seen to underlie much of what Pope Leo is inviting us to pray for in the coming months. His intention for July seeks respect and protection for the whole span of each human life, 'from conception to natural death' in the phrase used by Pope Saint John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium vitae*. This is based on an understanding of life as a gift from God, a gift which is the foundation of all the other gifts that God gives us.

The other intentions of these months point to some of the conditions necessary for that fullness of life. The September intention focuses on a physical requirement, that of water. There are millions of people in the world who have little or no access to fresh clean water, and this access cannot be assumed to happen automatically. Water resources need to be managed sustainably and made available to all, and it is this care of what the pope recognises as a 'vital resource' that he encourages us to ask God for, and to play our own part in securing.

The intentions in August and October move from physical to mental requirements for full and healthy living.

Many in big cities find themselves alone, far from family and friends, and isolated from their neighbours. One answer to the loneliness that this situation brings about is the community that the gospel, properly preached, brings into being. Of course, it is not enough to sit in an empty church reading Scripture to achieve this (although that may be a useful first stage). So the pope's August intention hopes to inspire creative ways of reaching out to those who suffer the anonymity of urban life.

Each of these intentions seeks full life from God and encourages us to be grateful for that gift.

Good mental health is a complex state, having a huge impact on quality of life. It can be promoted and supported in a wide variety of ways, and in October the pope suggests that we pray especially for one way in which the Church can assist this, through its dedicated mental health ministry. Although mental illness is much better understood today that it was in previous centuries, people suffering in this way are often still stigmatised, becoming

INTENTIONS FOR THIS PERIOD

JULY

For respect for human life

Let us pray for the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognizing it as a gift from God.

AUGUST

For evangelization in the city

Let us pray that in large cities often marked by anonymity and loneliness we find new ways to proclaim the Gospel, discovering creative paths to build community.

SEPTEMBER

For the care of water

Let us pray for a just and sustainable management of water, a vital resource, so that everyone may have equal access to it.

OCTOBER

For mental health ministry

Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illnesses.

victims of discrimination. The Church is called upon to play its part in overcoming this.

Saint Irenaeus proclaimed that 'the glory of God is a human being fully alive' (although some see this as a slightly misleading paraphrase of what he actually wrote). Each of the intentions here seeks that full life from God and encourages us to be grateful for the gift that it is. It is a gift that, insofar as we enjoy it, is very easy to take for granted. Maybe by focusing our prayer on some of the conditions which make for a whole and healthy life, we can come to appreciate better all that God has blessed us with. ●