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## Prayer is what makes us present in the world

If the Year of Prayer were to be extended to include a series of initiatives proposed by the Dicastery for Evangelisation, it would be a gross contradiction. Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has consistently maintained that “evangelisation is done on one's knees.” This phrase should serve as a guide in proposing the Year of Prayer. Indeed, contemplating the mystery of God in our lives and our relationship with Him should always be paramount. So many moments of our existence are shrouded in this mystery that we can no longer discover ourselves. The more we turn inwards, the more we discover our weakness and our contradictions. It is within this horizon that the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee should be placed. **The Jubilee, which is celebrated every 25 years, invites us to reflect on ourselves, to understand that nothing belongs to us and that everything is a God-given gift.** Chapter 25 of Leviticus, to which we turn as a source of inspiration for the Christian Jubilee, reminds us of this dimension: everything is a grace to which we must respond by offering what we have, starting with ourselves. Luke's account remains faithful to this idea when he tells us of Jesus in the synagogue proclaiming the year of salvation. We must therefore rediscover ourselves in order to have the certainty of standing firmly in the presence of God. Ultimately, the Year of Prayer is about this dimension: to stand in God's presence. For what could be more important in a person's life than standing before the Creator? Prayer is nothing other than an act of humility, in which we put aside our arrogance, our autonomy and our pride, and recognise our need for God. An act of prayer whereby, in humble attitude, we ask Him to teach us how to pray and to discover the right words to address Him. The Apostle does not hesitate to say that we are not even aware of what we should be asking for; that is why the Spirit comes to the rescue of our weakness, and the cry that rises from the depths of our hearts is an invocation to God with the word that Jesus himself taught us: Abba. The Year of Prayer will unfold in the context of the question that the disciples addressed to their Teacher: “Teach us to pray”. It is a request shared by all those who follow the Lord, in the knowledge that they are always beginning anew. The saints have taught us how valuable prayer can be in our daily lives, but they did so in the awareness that they were sinners, not saints. Therefore, we must recognise our daily need for God. This is an urgent need at a time like ours, when we often have the impression that God has been on the sidelines of our lives and is only in the forefront of our minds in certain circumstances. The Year of Prayer, on the contrary, seeks to put God back at the centre of our lives and to bring us to our knees before Him, without multiplying our petitions, in the awareness that He already knows them. It will therefore be necessary to express the need to be embraced, understood and forgiven by Him. **This Year of Prayer is therefore in anticipation of the Jubilee, which is marked by the great theme of indulgence as God's full forgiveness.** As we know, indulgence is synonymous with mercy, it indicates God's closeness, his compassion for us, his involvement in our lives, his mercy. The Year of Prayer is therefore best expressed in the desire to instill in the heart of every believer the certainty of the love and closeness of God.

This year will be a “school of prayer”. It will be a time to rediscover the steps needed to experience life in the presence of the listening God.

Moreover, Christian believers know that their prayer can be effective if it is set against the backdrop of the prayer that Jesus taught us. When the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, Jesus replied with words that encapsulate the entire Gospel he proclaimed. Entering into the Lord's Prayer little by little will indeed be an experience of discovering how much we truly need. The prayer that Jesus taught us is born of hope, the central theme of the coming Jubilee. The hope that the Kingdom of God will be more present among us through the Church's evangelising work; the hope of daily bread, of forgiveness, of being finally delivered from all evil. This prayer takes on the strength of many other forms in which we usually address the Lord Jesus through the intercession of Mary, his

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Mother. **Little by little, the "school of prayer" will teach us to speak words of thanksgiving for what we have received; words of invocation, so that God may always be praised; words of intercession, so that we may learn how to ask according to His will; words that end in silence, that we may be able to contemplate His love.** It is noted that the Year of Prayer will have no other initiatives than to encourage everyone to meditate on the importance of prayer. The 38 catecheses developed by Pope Francis for the years 2020-2021 will provide due guidance; eight authors will offer brief reflections on why and how to pray today; praying with the Psalms, with the prayer of Jesus, rediscovering the parables of prayer as well as the prayers of saints and sinners... Finally, a short manual from the Dicastery for Evangelisation will be available online for all those who wish to receive it. It will contain some brief indications of what we already do every day, but perhaps need to take up again with greater enthusiasm. This year will help the faithful to pray to God for peace in the world, that He may look with merciful love on the innocent victims of the scourge of violence that marks our days. A silent appeal to God to intercede for true and lasting peace. Once again, prayer becomes our way of being present in the world. Silent interpreters of the good of humanity, and in silence bearing personal witness and taking concrete steps in favour of the weakest and most marginalised among us. (\*) *pro-prefect of the Section for Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the world of the Dicastery for Evangelization*

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