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Press Conference to present the Year of Prayer in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee and the series "Notes on Prayer"

At 11.30 this morning, a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office to present the *Year of Prayer* in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee, and the series "Notes on Prayer".

The speakers were: Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World, and Msgr. Graham Bell, under-secretary in charge of the Secretariat of the same Dicastery.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of Archbishop Fisichella and Msgr. Bell

H.E. Msgr. Rino Fisichella – *Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for the Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the World*

In recent weeks, on several occasions, Pope Francis has referred to the year 2024 as the 'Year of Prayer'. Last Sunday during the Angelus he officially opened this Year which will be dedicated in a particular way to prayer. In the Letter of 11 February 2022 which he addressed to me to commission the Dicastery with the Jubilee, Pope Francis wrote: «In this time of preparation, I would greatly desire that we devote 2024, the year preceding the Jubilee event, to a great "symphony" of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him. Prayer, moreover, to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation, which summons everyone to respect it and to take concrete and responsible steps to protect it. Prayer as the expression of a single "heart and soul" (cf. Acts 4:32), which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread. Prayer that makes it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God and to reveal to him what lies hidden in the depths of their heart. Prayer as the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity. In a word, may it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God's grace and to make the "Our

Father,” the prayer Jesus taught us, the life programme of each of his disciples».

The year 2024 will therefore be one of preparation for the Jubilee which is about to begin and a year during which the spiritual significance of the Jubilee must emerge more clearly, something which goes far beyond the necessary and urgent forms of structural organization. As the Pope underlined in *Te Deum* at the end of last year: «The Christian, like Mary, is a pilgrim of hope. And this is precisely the theme of the Jubilee of 2025: ‘Pilgrims of hope’. Dear brothers and sisters, we might ask ourselves: is Rome preparing to become the “city of hope” during the Holy Year? [...] it is a question of the witness of the ecclesial and civil community, a witness that, more than events, consists in a life-style and in the ethical and spiritual quality of coexistence. And so the question one might ask is this: are we working, each person in his or her own sphere, so that the city may become a sign of hope for those who live there and those who visit?»

In order for the Jubilee to be an event that spiritually enriches the life of the Church and of the entire people of God, becoming a concrete sign of hope, it has to be prepared for and lived in individual communities with that spirit of expectation which is typical of Christian hope. The Year of Prayer fully corresponds to this need.

This is not a Year marked with particular initiatives; rather, it’s a privileged time in which to rediscover the value of prayer, the need for daily prayer in the Christian life; a time to discover how to pray, and above all how to educate the people of today in prayer, in this age of digital culture, so that prayer can be effective and fruitful. We cannot deny the fact that our time manifests a profound need for spirituality. The louder the cry of technology that seems to correspond to all our desires, the deeper we discern the search for a true spirituality that brings each person back to encounter themselves in the truth of their existence and therefore in a coherent relationship with God.

There are many people who pray every day; perhaps, I dare say, everyone prays. No statistic can give us a true picture, with figures and percentages, of this very intimate experience of people who know the multi-faceted nature of prayer in a completely personal way. From those who quickly make the sign of the cross, to those who participate in the daily Eucharist, there is such a vast range of ways of praying that no one can fully describe them all. From quick to distracted prayer; from contemplative prayer to prayer filled with tears of pain ... prayer cannot be captured in a pre-established pattern because it is a manifestation of the believer's personal relationship with God himself within that intimate and exclusive relationship that distinguishes our faith. The Year of Prayer, therefore, fits into this context as a way of fostering the relationship with the Lord, offering moments of genuine spiritual rest. It is like an oasis sheltered from daily stress where prayer becomes nourishment for the Christian life of faith, hope and charity.

For this reason, the Dicastery has prepared a series of materials and aids for the coming months and which can constitute a ‘symphony’ of prayer forms that the Christian community and individual believers can use. On the other hand, as Pope Francis wrote in the introduction to the first volume of the "Notes on Prayer" series: «Prayer is the breath of faith; it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God.»

It will not be a year which hinders initiatives of the local Churches; rather it should be seen as a period in which every planned initiative is supported effectively, precisely because it has prayer as its foundation. Therefore, we should not expect a series of specific events but, rather, ideas, suggestions, so that the prayer of the Church can once again reinvigorate and leave its mark on the life of every baptized person.

This year will be characterized by the expression the disciples addressed to Jesus: «Teach us to pray» (Lk 11:1). In fact we need to learn how to pray and the true Master can only be him: Jesus, the Son of God who with the prayer of the Our Father revolutionized the world of human prayer. The motto «Teach us to pray» is already a prayer that arises from the depths of the heart with the desire to be answered. Within this prayer of invocation, it seemed appropriate to highlight some simple ideas that are largely already implemented daily in our communities. It is therefore a question of revisiting our traditional forms of prayer which are well-known and lived out, but in this Year experiencing them more intensely and frequently, so as to make our relationship with the Lord more stable.

I would like to offer some suggestions that can accompany our meditation and reading in order to better understand the value of prayer.

1. First of all, there are the 38 catechetical talks that Pope Francis gave from 6 May 2020 to 16 June 2021. These are texts that consider the various forms of prayer and they can be re-read, as they contain many useful suggestions.

2. We also thought it useful to prepare a series of volumes entitled "Notes on Prayer".

Msgr. Graham Bell - *Undersecretary in Charge of the Secretariat of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World*

In this year 2024, which Pope Francis has consecrated as the Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee of 2025, Libreria Editrice Vaticana is publishing, starting today, a series of small texts that delve into the various dimensions of the Christian act of praying, signed by authors of international renown, edited by the Dicastery for Evangelization - Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World.

This series, consisting of eight volumes, is made available to the various bishops' conferences to be, over the coming months, a useful aid to enter further into the intelligence of prayer.

The first book *Praying Today. A Challenge to Be Overcome* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, pp. 110, euro 8.50), with a preface by Pope Francis, is authored by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, one of the best-known authors of spirituality who was Vicar General of Vatican City and Archpriest of St. Peter's. The text, available in bookstores starting today, January 23, offers reminders of the need for prayer and teachings for having "a different gaze and a different heart" by highlighting figures who have testified on the fruitfulness of prayer such as St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. In the preface, Pope Francis recalls that «prayer is the breath of faith, it is its most proper expression. Like a silent cry that comes forth from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God.» In this year, with the Jubilee just around the corner, the Pope says, «we are invited to become more humble and to make room for the prayer that flows from the Holy Spirit.» Cardinal Comastri points out for his part that «only prayer gives space to God in our lives and in the history of the world: and with God everything is possible.»

The publication of the other seven volumes will follow shortly:

- Gianfranco Ravasi, *Praying with the Psalms* (February 2024)
- Juan López Vergara, *The Prayer of Jesus* (February 2024)
- Paul Murray OP, *Praying with Saints and Sinners* (March 2024)
- Antonio Pitta, *Parables on Prayer* (March 2024)
- Carthusian Monks, *The Church in Prayer* (March 2024)
- Catherine Aubin, *The Prayer of Mary and the Saints* (April 2024)
- Ugo Vanni, *The Prayer Jesus Taught Us: The 'Our Father'* (April 2024)

H.E. Msgr. Rino Fisichella – *Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for the Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the World*

3. Together with these resources we will prepare pastoral aids that present anew the various expressions of

prayer in the community, in the family, for priests, cloistered nuns, sanctuaries, young people and so on ... in short, nothing extraordinary, not new prayers, but help to live with greater awareness of the need for daily prayer.

4. The Pope himself, during this year, will set up a 'School of Prayer'. This will be a series of moments of encounter with specific groups of people to pray together and better understand the various forms of prayer: from thanksgiving to intercession; from contemplative prayer to the prayer of consolation; from adoration to supplication...

As Pope Francis wrote: «I am certain that bishops, priests, deacons and catechists will find in this year, appropriate ways to place prayer at the heart of the *announcement of hope* that the 2025 Jubilee will make resound in this troubled time».

The Dicastery, therefore, is always available to Episcopal Conferences and Diocesan Jubilee representatives to provide further clarifications and make material available, which will be prepared from time to time.
