

# REFLECTIONS ON THE POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS

## December 2019, January, and February 2020

### Daily Offering Prayer

God, our Father, I offer You my day. I offer You my prayers, thoughts, words, actions, joys, and sufferings in union with the Heart of Jesus, who continues to offer Himself in the Eucharist for the salvation of the world. May the Holy Spirit, who guided Jesus, be my guide and my strength today so that I may witness to Your love. With Mary, the mother of our Lord and of the Church, I pray for all Apostles of Prayer and for this month's intentions proposed by the Holy Father. Amen.

### Traditional Offering Prayer

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, and the reunion of all Christians. I offer them for the intentions of our bishops and of all Apostles of Prayer, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

## December

### The Future of the Very Young

*That every country take the measures necessary to prioritize the future of the very young, especially those who are suffering.*

### Reflection by Fr. Henry Shea, SJ

Shortly after my ordination I was missioned by the Jesuits to England for doctoral studies. There are few British winter traditions more famous than the service of Lessons and Carols held on Christmas Eve at Kings College Cambridge and broadcast throughout the country on the BBC. Since 1919 the choir at Kings College has opened this service with the same hymn, "Once in Royal David's City," the simple lyrics of which speak to the profound paradox of the mystery of Christmas. "He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all. / And his shelter was a stable, and His cradle was a stall. / With the poor, and mean, and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy."

By the mystery of the Incarnation, God became a little child. There are few religious scenes more moving and tender than the infant Jesus in the arms of his mother. The Lord of all, now weak and vulnerable, is enwrapped in the loving care of Mary.

The same Mary is not only our mother but also our model. So many children throughout the world today, likewise weak and vulnerable, are also subject to poverty, injustice, and violence. In them Christ comes to us anew, albeit in "distressing disguise." As we enjoy the beauty of Christmas creches and hear the old, familiar carols, let us pray that these venerable traditions may really move us to become more like Mary, to set aside our own interests and preoccupations to tend to those of Christ, the Christ who beckons us to care for the vulnerable and needy among us, prioritizing the "very young, especially those who are suffering."



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## January

### Promotion of World Peace

*We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.*

### Reflection by Fr. William Blazek, SJ

This month we are praying that the gift Jesus promised us will spread over all the world. The Holy Father invites not only Christians to pray with us, but followers of other religions and all people of goodwill. We are praying for peace as well as for justice.

“Peace I leave with you, peace is my gift to you.” (Jn 14:27) The peace that Jesus gives brings serenity and freedom: The Hebrew word for peace, is shalom. In the translation of the bible into Greek it became eirene, which includes a sense of wholeness, completeness, success, fulfillment, harmony, security and even well-being. Still Jesus warned: “I do not give as the world gives.” His peace is otherworldly, and may await us in our heavenly reward. Still we labor here to establish the kingdom.

The Holy Father desires that his prayer intentions be directed towards “the challenges facing humanity.” As such they are of interest to people of other cultures, countries and even religions. The desire for peace and justice is deeply seated in the hearts of all men and women of goodwill and for this the Holy Father welcomes the cooperation those who pray alongside us.

What about justice, what does it look like? A wise Jesuit, Fr Earl Weis, SJ (RIP) once challenged me when discussing social justice: “Are you talking about man’s justice, or God’s?” It was a great question and caused me to pray for justice on a entirely new plane: “Thy will be done, Oh Lord, thy will.” May God’s peace and justice reign in our hearts, be established here on earth, and await us in the kingdom of heaven.

## February

### Listen to the Migrants’ Cries

*We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.*

### Reflection by Fr Joe Laramie SJ

Knock knock. “Who’s there?” This is a familiar format for a children’s riddle. You knock, I ask, you reply. It’s based on a simple action-- someone knocks on my door and I ask, “Who is it?” Is this a stranger? A friend? A criminal? Who is knocking? We’re right to be curious. And it’s ok to ask questions. But should we automatically be suspicious? What if this is a friend, or someone who needs my help?

This February, Pope Francis asks us to hear the cries of migrants. After all, we shouldn’t bolt the door until we know who is knocking, right? He writes, “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age” (Pope Francis, Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees).

After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt with their child. They escape from King Herod who searches for the child “to destroy him” [Matt 2:13]. After this danger passes, the Holy Family returns to their homeland. They were refugees only temporarily. Perhaps they knocked on an unfamiliar door seeking shelter. Imagine Joseph offering to work in exchange for food and housing. Knock knock. “Who’s there?”

Modern migration is a complex issue. A humane response requires compassion, wisdom, and cooperation from citizens, churches, police, and government leaders. If we shut our ears and lock the doors of our hearts, then we will never hear the cries of the poor seeking protection and opportunity. Jesus says, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Who is knocking at our door? How will we respond?