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Francis, the comic strip
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In a video message released by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network Aug. 3, Pope Francis offered his prayer intention for the month of August and prayed that the church "may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace and strength to reform herself in the light of the Gospel." (CNS screenshot/Vatican Media)

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Difficulties and crises within the Catholic Church are not signs of a church in decline but one that is alive and living through challenges, just like men and women today, Pope Francis said.

"Let us remember that the church always has difficulties, always is in crisis, because she's alive. Living things go through crises. Only the dead don't have crises," he said.

In a video message released by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network Aug. 3, the pope offered his prayer intention for the month of August, which is dedicated to the church's mission of evangelization.

At the start of each month, the network posts a short video of the pope offering his specific prayer intention.

The church's call to evangelize and not proselytize, he said, is more than just a vocation; it is a part of the Catholic Church's identity.

"We can only renew the church by discerning God's will in our daily life and embarking on a transformation guided by the Holy Spirit. Our own reform as persons is that transformation. Allowing the Holy Spirit, the gift of God, in our hearts reminds us what Jesus taught and helps us put it into practice," the pope said.

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Catholics can renew the church only by "discerning God's will in our daily life" and putting Jesus' teaching into practice, he added.

"Let us begin reforming the church with a reform of ourselves, without prefabricated ideas, without ideological prejudices, without rigidity, but rather by moving forward based on spiritual experience — an experience of prayer, an experience of charity, an experience of service," the pope said.

Before reciting his prayer intention, Francis expressed his hope for "an even more missionary option" that "goes out to meet others without proselytism."

"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," he said.

The Pope Video was first launched in 2016 to encourage people to join an estimated 50 million Catholics who already had a more formal relationship with the prayer network — better known by its former title, the Apostleship of Prayer.

The prayer network is more than 170 years old.