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US Franciscan province offers 'text-a-prayer-intention' service

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Often, prayer intentions are offered with hands folded, but a new service allows hands and fingers to move freely -- provided a cellphone is handy.

The New York-based Holy Name Province of the Franciscans has started a service it calls "Text a Prayer Intention to a Franciscan Friar."

The service debuted in January with the new year.

Here's how it works: Text the word "prayer" to 306-44 and hit "send." Senders will then receive a welcome message inviting them to then send in their prayer intentions. Senders will receive a text in reply stating that their prayer has been received and will be prayed for.

The intentions are received on a website and will be included collectively in the friars' prayers twice a day and at Mass.

"With technology changing the way we communicate, we needed to offer people an updated way to ask for prayers for special intentions and needs either for themselves or others," said a Jan. 8 statement by Franciscan Fr. David Convertino, executive director of development for the Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province.

"We have been working on this for some time and it's a great way to bring in the New Year," Convertino added. "If the pope can tweet, friars can text."

Pope Benedict XVI launched his Twitter account in mid-December.

The Holy Name Province is the largest U.S. province of the worldwide Order of Friars Minor, with 300 members serving throughout the East Coast in college, parish, social service and urban ministry, with some on overseas assignments as well.

However, with cellphone technology and access virtually universal, the province's range could be even larger.

"This is one more way of reaching people who ask us to pray for them," Convertino said. "We hope it can reach people all around the globe."

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