

LET THIS BE A YEAR OF PRAYER!

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In his book “Wings of Fire”, the President of India A.P.J. Abdul Kalam describes a touching incident. During the initial testing period of the ‘Akash Missile”. Dr. Abdul Kalam’s best friend and colleague Arun Tiwari was admitted to the ICU because of a cardiac problem. Dr. Abdul Kalam went to visit Arun Tiwari, who was fighting for his life in the ICU. Dr. Abdul Kalam asked his friend, “Is there anything that I can do for you?” This was the reply of Tiwari, “Bless me so that I will have a longer life to complete at least one of your projects. “Kalam continues.: “That whole night I prayed for the recovery of Tiwari. The omnipotent Lord listened to my prayers. Mr. Tiwari recovered and rejoined his services within a month. I was able to make him a partner in the project of the Akash Missile.” The intercessory prayer by Dr. Kalam, whose mind is filled with intelligence, wisdom and scientific and technological thoughts, inspired by a spiritual insight, should be a model for us. Our prayers, too, must be for the welfare, growth and prosperity of others.

In today’s world, vices, violence, sins, diseases and distresses multiply. Somehow, directly or otherwise, we too are responsible for this unenviable predicament, this explosive situation. “The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress. And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one” (Ezek 22:29-30). If our hands of prayers had lifted for them, there would have been less vice in the homes, in the society and in the world at large. The prayer of Moses holding up his hand, when the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua were fighting against Amalek, (Ex 17:8-16) should be a model for us. Through our intercessory prayers we should bring back into the fold those who have strayed away from the grace of God just like Cain. It will be possible only

when we have a generous and altruistic heart which craves for the salvation of others by eschewing narrow tendencies, where thoughts linger on 'my' and 'our' welfare to the exclusion of 'their' well-being. The entire life of Jesus was one of intercessory prayers and altruistic acts. In the prayer of Jesus we can see his insatiable desire to bring into salvation those who have been straying into perdition. The 17th Chapter of John's Gospel is the intercessory prayer of Jesus. Let the portrait of Jesus, who takes upon himself our sins and pains and pleading on our behalf, shine in our hearts.

Making Jesus who prays in Gethsemane our model, let us make 2007 a year of prayer. It does not mean that the past years were not used for prayers. Of course they were. But over and above the usual prayers, let us spiritually adopt the sick people, the poor, the people in pain, the childless couples, the missionaries – in fact all the people, all the families and all the nations around the world – through intercessory prayers. Let the New Year witness a drastic reduction in the violence, disasters and immoralities that wreak havoc in the world. Let there be some spiritual throbs in every heart. When the moonlight of prayers reflects on all the minds, the divine shine of spirituality and transformation will make 2007 more attractive and beautiful. Let us make intercessory prayers to Jesus as a penitential redress for all the transgressions that stained the past years. With a moment's intercessory prayer, we can save millions of sinners around the world. Let us fold our hands, bend our heads low and entreat, "Send your Holy Spirit; the Earth will then be renewed".