



EIGHTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR  
November 17th 2024

LITURGICAL AND PASTORAL HANDBOOK  
THE PRAYER OF THE  
POOR RISES UP TO GOD

(cf. Sir 21:5)



DICASTERY FOR EVANGELIZATION  
SECTION FOR FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS  
REGARDING EVANGELIZATION IN THE WORLD



LITURGICAL AND  
PASTORAL HANDBOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

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**H.E. Archbishop Rino Fisichella**

Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization

Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World

Pope Francis has chosen a particularly meaningful theme for the **Eighth World Day of the Poor** in this year dedicated to prayer, now approaching the beginning of the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025: “The prayer of the poor rises up to God” (cf. Sir 21:5).

It is evident from the words he wrote in his *Message* for this day how closely Pope Francis holds the poor and God's care for them in his heart: “The poor hold a privileged place in God's heart ... God knows the sufferings of his children because he is an attentive and caring father. As a father, he takes care of those who are most in need: the poor, the marginalized, the suffering and the forgotten.” (No. 4).

On Christmas night this year, the Holy Father will open the Holy Door of St. Peter's Papal Basilica, thus beginning a year in which the grace of the Jubilee indulgence will bring forgiveness and mercy in the light of hope. The certainty of Christian hope also embraces the assurance that our prayer will reach all the way to the presence of God. Strengthened by this hope let us keep our gaze fixed on the Poor who are present in our lives every day, so that prayer may be an experience of communion with them and become a source of sharing in their suffering.

As the whole Church prepares for this Jubilee with the Year of Prayer, we are invited to pray for the poor and to pray with them, humbly and confidently. This prayer must then find the confirmation of its authenticity through concrete acts of charity. Pope Francis reiterates that, in fact, prayer and works are interrelated: “if prayer does not translate into concrete action, it is in vain; ... However, charity without prayer risks becoming philanthropy that soon exhausts itself” (No. 7). This is the legacy left to us by so many saints in history, such as St. Teresa of Calcutta and St. Benedict Joseph Labre.

The **World Day of the Poor** becomes more and more rooted in the hearts of Christians around the world each year with numerous initiatives, fruit of the creative charity that animates and inspires the commitment of faith. This *Pastoral Handbook* is meant to be a simple tool offered to dioceses, parishes and all the various ecclesial realities, to prepare for and to celebrate the **Eighth World Day of the Poor**, so that it may once again be a powerful time in which to turn our gaze more and more towards the poor, to listen to their voice and to be near them. On this journey toward the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, may our attention to those most in need make us all *Pilgrims of Hope* in a world that needs to be illuminated by the presence of the Light of the Risen One and the torch of charity that He has lit in our hearts.

## COMMENTARY ON THE THEME

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**Fr. Lorenzo Gasparro, cssr**

Associate Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Pontificia Facoltà Teologica dell'Italia Meridionale – Sez. San Luigi.

# “THE PRAYER OF THE POOR RISES UP TO GOD”

(Sir 21:5)

One of the marvelous aspects of the biblical text – confirming its being the Word of God instead of man’s word – lies in expressing ineffable realities in the simplest of words. Such is the case with Sirach 21:5, which literally reads, “The prayer of the poor goes from their lips to the ears of God” – a simple phrase, seemingly self-evident, but very dense in meaning, because it says something essential about God and man, while at the same time providing a key to understanding the whole history of salvation. Taking up an expression from von Balthasar, we could say that the Word has the wonderful prerogative of saying “the whole in the fragment,” indeed “the whole in every fragment.” Where that “whole” is... there is God, man, the meaning of his life and of all of history.

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God:* This is affirmed by Ben Sira, a second-century B.C. Jerusalemite scribe and sage, deeply rooted in the Law and tradition of Israel, but at the same time eager to re-actualize both for his generation. In doing so, he recalls what the Spirit asks of the believer of every age: to reread the Word in light of the present, in a faithfulness that is not rigid repetition but creative reincarnation. What Ben Sira proclaims is not mere theory, but an experience-able “reality” throughout salvation history. In fact, the biblical text records countless instances when a man or the entire people, in material or moral hardship, turned to God and was promptly answered. Think of Abraham (Gen 15:2-3), Moses (Ex 17:8-13; 32:11-14), Elijah (1 Kgs 19), Esther (4:17), Israel in Egypt or Babylon, and so many other instances. God’s answered prayers of the poor weave through and through, like a red thread throughout all of Scripture from the first to the last page.

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God* first of all proclaims something essential about our Lord, telling of His kindness to those in need. The biblical text repeatedly proclaims that He hears the prayers of all, but especially of the “poor” (Ex 22:26; Deut 10:18; 24:15; Mt 3:5). The Psalms declare that the biblical God chooses the last, His listening being tilted toward the wretched and miserable (Ps 40:18; 76:10; 113:7-9; 146:7-9). This is a

humanly questionable logic, which in some people's eyes might appear discriminatory or not "politically correct," but which in fact opens to us the depths of God's heart and the compassion that sets him apart. Whether we like it or not, whether we are comfortable with it or not, this is our God, as He revealed Himself in the Scriptures. Jesus Christ, the perfect exegete of the Father (Jn 1:18), confirmed this "partiality" by declaring Himself sent "to the poor" (Lk 4:18), proclaiming these "blessed" (Mt 5:3) and embodying this predilection throughout His earthly existence.

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God* furthermore proclaims something decisive about man, suggesting that he is never so great as when he makes himself poor, consciously assuming this truthful dimension of himself. His poverty is mysteriously his wealth, precisely because it opens to him the immensities of God's heart and mercy. I had the grace and honour of being a missionary in Africa for thirteen years, and one of the things that struck me most was the amount of "miracles" that the poor experience daily: infinitely more than I notice or hear about in Europe. At first I marveled at this discrepancy, then I understood the reason, which is as though it were engraved in the aforementioned verse from Sirach. Material poverty creates a humble heart that, when it turns to God, "obliges" Him to intervene. God never resists the request of the poor – not because He is forced to, but because He has so chosen it. This is why they are "blessed," because they are exceedingly loved and favoured by God.

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God.* But then what to do for those who, like us, live in the world of wealth and affluence? How to ensure that even our prayer is accepted by the God who preferentially loves the

Material poverty creates a humble heart that, when it turns to God, "obliges" Him to intervene. God never resists the request of the poor. This is why they are "blessed," because they are exceedingly loved and favoured by God.

poor? Scripture offers us two paths: humility and giving. The first makes man "small" in his innermost core, namely the heart. Not surprisingly, "The prayer of the humble (*tapeinos*) pierces the clouds" (Sir 35:17), just like that of the poor (*ptōchos* in Sir 21:5). The second way is giving, that is, the generosity of those who possess but do not selfishly keep for themselves. Sharing makes even the rich person's heart "poor," making them free and not possessed by things. The one who in abundance gives generously transforms "dishonest" wealth (Lk 16:9) into doubly "lifesaving" charity, for themselves and for those in need. As Jesus explained in the parable of the dishonest steward (Lk 16:1-9) – a splendid reflection on the proper use of possessions – wealth has the decisive power to perish or save us: that is why it must be subjected to careful discernment.

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God* thus signals a road, not only for those in need, but also for those living in wealth. It points to generous charity as an effective therapy that has the power to make the heart of every person – rich or destitute – poor, thus opening to his or her prayer a highway that leads straight to God's listening ear.







## COMMENTARY ON POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE

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**H.E. Mgr. Mauro Maria Morfino, sdb**  
Bishop of Alghero - Bosa

"To the one with much charity, many are the poor. To the one with little charity, few are the poor. The one with no charity sees no one." These are the words of Fr. Primo Mazzolari which, as I read Pope Francis' Message for the Eighth World Day of the Poor, *The prayer of the poor rises up to God* (Sir 21:5), emerged, resolutely, in my mind.

The *Message* of the bishop of Rome, who "presides in charity" over all the Churches, is offered to us at the conclusion of this year most intensely associated with prayer, almost as a preamble to the great Jubilee that is about to begin, edifying us as a Church "expert in humanity," as St. Paul VI was so fond of saying.

Pope Francis reminds us that any community of ours whose prayer becomes a way of communion *with* the poor to the point of *sharing* in their sufferings (No. 1), can offer to our time a critical but not judgmental assessment of a present that is still so lacking in humanity and therefore lacking in God and his healing power; a present that, precisely because it is poor in humanity, holds back and denies the saving breakthrough of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. But any Christian community becomes fully such only on the condition of living out a high standard – the highest possible – of humanity in the present, among ourselves and with those whom the Lord gives us to love and serve, whoever they may be, especially the poorest, the weakest, those mocked by life. It goes without saying that, a humanity of such a high caliber can only arise from an *abundance of prayer*. Anyone who attempts to walk in the ways of the Gospel learns, at his or her cost, that "measured" prayer commiserates – and inevitably to the dangerous downside – attention to the other, care, the gift of self. Yes, avarice in prayer dries up the roots and breaks the wings of charity.

And it is evident that the two witnesses of the Gospel mentioned by the Pope toward the end of the *Message* (cf. No. 8) – Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Benedict Joseph Labre – had an exceptional inner "empowerment," able to discern poverty and care for it by sharing with it, precisely because they tirelessly visited God in prayer. Innumerable the poor *seen and cared for* but because tireless and

prodigal is their familiarity with God in prayer. Prayer which thus becomes precisely “a path of communion with them and a sharing in their suffering” (No. 1).

At the heart of the *Message*, Pope Francis recalls a quote from *Evangelii gaudium* (No. 200) that, it seems to me, makes the *Message* luminous, handing us a steadfast guiding compass: “the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care ... Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care”. It seems to me that, in these two expressions the Pope simultaneously offers a diagnosis and a therapy. Placed in the first position, *worse/peior* – comparative adjective of *malus/bad* – related to the “discrimination” to which the poor are subjected, it does not allow for mitigation or lessening or reductionism or rationalization or diagnostic sugar-coating. The “lack of spiritual care” for the poor, is referred to here as a discriminatory attitude that is *more than evil*. This, it seems to me, can be considered the diagnosis. The treatment is immediately and crisply delivered: *care* must have the double connotation of “privileged” and “preferential,” which, in other words, means wanted, sought after, timely, favoured, prevalent, indispensable, and not episodic. All this, concretely specifies what Francis refers to as the “preferential option for the poor”. *Preferentiality* cannot but become obvious, concrete, explicit “partisan” choices.

Jesus urgently calls, precisely, to “not sleep, not get drunk, not dissipate, not become distracted, keep watch, be ready, not lose sight of, guard, preserve, protect, take interest, safeguard, be vigilant”

Mirroring Mazzolari's words quoted in the opening, these words of Pope Francis, shine a powerful light on a possibility – sadly always possible – that can materialize in every human heart: the attitude that biblical and liturgical texts suggest *slumber, dissipation, lack of vigilance*. It is interesting to note how the Lord Jesus, in the New Testament, urgently calls, precisely, to “not sleep, not get drunk, not dissipate, not become distracted, keep watch, be ready, not lose sight of, guard, preserve, protect, take interest, safeguard, be vigilant.”

Both personal and ministerial experience compels me to affirm that the most striking shortfall and the perverse root – just in the etymological sense of “upsetting/underwhelming” – in so many of our omissions or responses that are trivial or incomplete or inadequate or, more simply, not given to history and stories, the requests, the weeping, the pain of others, lies precisely in *lack of attention, distraction, and neglect*. Strained and distracted by so much, by too much and by too many heavy vacuities, we hear without listening, we see without resting our gaze, we act-when we act – without having comprehended and without having received. That is to say, we desert reality, history, happenings, precisely because we are locked in an anesthesia of the spirit that can no longer discern the flow of life.

It does not seem to me to be a forced interpretation, precisely taking into account the immediate context of the text of Sirach 21:5 chosen by the Pope, to extend one's gaze and see that the chapter immediately following is opened by Ben Sira with words of fire against the slothful: “The sluggard is like a filthy stone; everyone hisses at his disgrace. The sluggard is like a lump of dung; whoever touches it shakes it off the hands.” (Sir 22:1-2). The simile is of rare eloquence and very little remains to be explained. There is a laziness of heart and spirit – what the great Eastern patristic tradition indicates as *acedia/a-kèdos*: “not caring” – at the root of so much of our dis-attention, distraction, negligence toward the poor, in our turning our gaze away, until they become transparent, invisible, and intangible. We waste, reminds us Pope Francis.



God himself watches, is a “watchman” who does not slumber because he does not forget, because he cares; God watches over humanity to accompany it, to recover it because he does not resign himself to someone despairing of his love; God watches over his Word to send it into effect; God watches because he is the Good Shepherd who does not want the wolf to maul his sheep; God watches because he holds nothing dearer to His heart than humanity; God watches so that those who have strayed will return and be found. God watches because “God is love”

But every waste, always has its root in an auditory, visual, affective waste. There is so much slothful laziness in our disinterestedness, in our lethargy, in our squandering that it so weakens the heart to the point of sclerosis, clouds the will to the point of intoxication, and paralyzes the hands, which have become incapable of lifting, of embracing, of caring. Ben Sira's graphic comparison is so effective that it relieves us of all other speculation.

How distracted our hearts are, resulting in dulling of the senses, how God *watches, does not sleep, is a vigilant watchman*: “Behold, the guardian of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps. The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.” (Ps 121:4-5). The theme of “guarding” and protection runs through the entire psalm: in Hebrew we find three times, in vv. 3-5, the word “guardian” and three times the verb “to guard”. At the very eloquent heart of the text is the wonderful metaphor intended to express the concept of a patient presence, which never abandons nor can abandon, which “follows” without interruption of any kind, just like *tzel*, shade: “the LORD is your shade”. But so many are the biblical texts that remind us that *God himself watches*, is a “watchman” who does not slumber because he does not forget, because he cares; *God watches* over humanity to accompany it, to recover it because he does not resign himself to someone despairing of his love; *God watches* over his Word to send it into effect; *God watches* because he is the Good Shepherd who does not want the wolf to maul his sheep; *God watches* because he holds nothing dearer to His heart than

humanity; *God watches* so that those who have strayed will return and be found. *God watches* because “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). “To the one with much charity, many are the poor. To the one with little charity, few are the poor. The one with no charity sees no one.”

Pope Francis reminds us that *God is attentive to the prayer of the poor; he hears it*. Moreover, he is “eager” to give answers of justice (cf. No. 4). And the whole of holy Scripture certifies to us this tireless divine disposition to be there, to give answers, to take seriously. And this is precisely the authentic formula of life, the truth of love.

*He who loves much, sees much, and he who really sees, concretely takes it to heart!*

“The Israelites *groaned* under their bondage and *cried out*, and from their bondage their cry for help went up to God. God *heard* their moaning and God was *mindful* of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God *saw* the Israelites, and God *knew*....” (Ex 2:23-25).

At the beginning of the great adventure of coming out of Egypt there is a shouted groan, and God's first saving act will be to *listen*. For that credit received, for that gratuitous “inconvenience,” Israel will forever address God by narrating him as the “Righteous and Holy One.” If the *in-principle* is “God hears/sees/remembers,” the fulfillment/response is his *chèsed*, a very dense term of biblical Hebrew (it occurs 245 times in the First Testament, as many as 127 of them in the Psalter alone) and untranslatable into a single

term of ours. It simultaneously denotes faithfulness (the one who is unwaveringly stable even when the other party is incapable of fidelity), persevering loyalty, amiability, goodness, love, gratuitousness, mercy, tenderness, care, kindness, attention, benevolence, compromise, compassion, affectionate proximity, solicitude, putting oneself in another's shoes... "Chèsed is a spontaneous, non-commanded sympathy between two people, a grace and love that surpasses duty, a feeling and not an obligation" (André Neher).

And again, God will hear "the voice of the bloodsheds" – note the interesting plural highlighted by the synagogue interpretive tradition to indicate the immense loss that is the suppression of a single human life (cf. *Bereshit Rabba* 22,9 and TB- *Sanhedrin* 37°) – that entangle the earth, those bloodsheds poured out by the murderous hand of one brother upon another, of Cain upon Abel. It will be the very earth that will demand reason, torn because it was forced to swallow life, calling into question God who had given it to it as a gift. And God will call Cain to account, "Where is your brother?" (cf. Gn 4:9).

Until the climax of that endless and tragic cry of Jesus, nailed to the cross (cf. Mk 15:37), the last and implacable condemnation of all wickedness and injustice. On the third day, in an unprecedented way, the Father will answer him with the holy Resurrection.

Finally, the Pope reminds us of how the deadly "silence" of inattention, distraction, neglect, can be decisively broken: "This silence, therefore, is broken every time a person in need is welcomed and embraced" (No. 7). The poor brother becomes, therefore, seen, looked at, re-recognized; he becomes a catalyst of attraction *for me*; he is offered concrete actual and affective space. Therefore, it is the welcoming – that embraces – that is, the one who breaks free from self and decides to care for the other – that shatters the glass wall that makes the poor transparent and invisible. It is the embrace that cares that makes the poor truly *present* within my perspective and becomes the only hammer capable of crumbling passive strangeness and apathetic indifference. It is, after all, what Francis describes as "the little details of love: stopping, drawing near, giving a little attention, a smile, a caress, a word of comfort" (No. 9, which cites *Gaudete et exultate* 145). Of course, "details." But isn't life made up of details? Details that allow life to flow, that say presence, proximity, a decision to share. But with an important caveat: details that "are not automatic; they require a daily commitment and are often hidden and silent, but strengthened by prayer" (*ibidem*).

We thank Pope Francis for the evangelistic freshness of this *Message*.

"To the one with much charity, many are the poor. To the one with little charity, few are the poor. The one with no charity sees no one".

# PASTORAL PROPOSALS

“If prayer does not translate into concrete action, it is in vain; indeed, ‘faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead’ (Jas 2:17). However, charity without prayer risks becoming philanthropy that soon exhausts itself. Without daily prayer lived with fidelity, our acts are empty, they lose their profound soul, and are reduced to being mere activism”

(Pope Francis)

This is the great challenge we receive from the Holy Father in his *Message for the **Eighth World Day of the Poor***. Theoretical rhetoric or beautiful words in the face of the poor are not enough; we need the concreteness of human gestures towards real people. The invitation addressed to each person is that of involving themselves in the lives of their brothers and sisters who are in situations of poverty, through simple, everyday gestures.

Some initiatives are proposed to be encouraged in dioceses, parishes and different communities, which can be reconfigured according to the particular needs of each ecclesial reality. May the Holy Spirit work in our hearts and act in us, guiding us toward others with the same loving and benevolent gaze of God.





## 1 PREPARING WITH PRAYER

- Promote the occasion throughout the week preceding the Day, remembering the poor in the community in the intentions of the weekday Masses and inviting everyone to the activities of the World Day of the Poor.
- Have a prayer vigil on the evening of Saturday, November 16, with members and volunteers of charitable associations and groups operating in the community. Involve those who are helped by them as well. For this moment, you can start from the proposal given in this Pastoral Resource.
- Pray the Rosary in the community, entrusting the intentions of those most in need to Our Lady.
- Involve the contemplative and cloistered communities so that they pray especially for the poorest and those most in need in the community.
- Do a special catechesis for youth and young adults on poverty, inviting them to discover who the poor that they encounter in their daily lives are: those who live on the fringes, those who have no relationships or friendships at school, those who live in disadvantaged situations.



## 2 LIVING IN THE LITURGY

- On Sunday, November 17, it will be useful to highlight the celebration of the World Day of the Poor and adapt the homily to emphasize service to those in need.
- If there is an immigrant/refugee in the church community, invite them to write a testimony and reflection on their situation of hardship and publish it in the parish bulletin or diocesan newspaper.
- Invite poor and people in need to the Sunday Mass and offer them to read the readings and participate in the offertory procession.
- Ask a volunteer from an active charitable group in the parish to write the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful and read them at Mass.
- Suggest a special charitable collection for those in distress, allocating what is collected to a charitable organization in the parish.
- Write different biblical quotes on small pieces of paper that can be rolled or folded and, at the end of Mass, can be given to the faithful so they can read them at home as a reminder of the occasion.



### 3 CHARITABLE WORKS

- Accepting the invitation made now on multiple occasions by the Holy Father to share a Sunday lunch with those who are in need. A meal can be offered to the poor in the community, followed by a time of fellowship and sharing, or each family can invite someone who is experiencing hardship, to their home.
- Use the opportunity of this World Day of the Poor to visit lonely people either in hospitals, senior care centres, sometimes even in their homes.
- Pay special attention to young people who are lonely, abandoned, rejected, who may feel "unsuccessful" and "good for nothing." Invite them to an activity that can foster reintegration into a new group, creating relationships that are supportive and friendly.
- Offer some basic medicines to families in need, especially if there are children, people who are ill, or the elderly.
- If there are war refugees in the community, bring them groceries and offer a small religious item.
- Get to know the leaders of associations that work with different forms of poverty (economic, social, human), in the area where the church community lives, to learn about their work and any help they need.





# PRAYER VIGIL

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This vigil is to be a time of prayer, giving a community time to offer to God all the activities it has undertaken throughout the year to support people in need. It must not be seen as a one-time event, that is, as a celebration that takes place once a year because it is suggested. To avoid this, it would be good to invite all people of good will and all the groups in a parish or in the public that are dedicated in various ways to helping the poor in body and spirit.

During this time of prayer, we want to emphasize that the beginning of our work on behalf of the poor, as well as the end of all our efforts, is found in God, who inspires our hearts to commit ourselves to helping our neighbour. We suggest a simple structure centred on listening to the Word of God, however this proposal should be later concretized and inculturated, depending on local traditions.

The Vigil could be carried out with the Blessed Sacrament exposed.

## **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**

If it has been decided to hold the Vigil with the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the Priest proceeds as usual. Having gathered the faithful and begun the hymn, the priest approaches the Tabernacle. He brings the Blessed Sacrament and places it in the monstrance. Kneeling, the priest incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Then follows a hymn and an introductory word, which could be as follows:

*C./* We now celebrate the World Day of the Poor for the eighth time in the universal Church. It is a time of reflection and thanksgiving, to take up again with new strength our commitments made in the past months in support of the poor. We stand before the Lord, truly present in this Blessed Sacrament. His presence in this bread speaks to us of His poverty: "he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). It also confronts us with the presence of God in every person we encounter on our path, especially in the smallest, the weakest and the most disadvantaged. Sustained by this certainty, let us live this moment of prayer, humble and begging prayer, knowing that "the prayer of the poor rises up to God" (cf. Sir 21:5) and is heard and received by a God who is our Father!

*R./* O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine, All praise and all thanksgiving, Be every moment Thine! *(Repeat 3 times)*

*Moment of silence*

## The Word of God

C./ Let us be guided tonight by the Word of God; may it resonate within us and enlighten our lives.

### L./ Let us listen to the Word of the Lord from the First Letter of St. John

(1Jn 4:10-16)

In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

### Psalm 34 (33)

**This poor one cried out and the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.**

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be always in my mouth.  
My soul will glory in the LORD;  
let the poor hear and be glad.  
Magnify the LORD with me;  
and let us exalt his name together.

I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
delivered me from all my fears.  
Look to him and be radiant,  
and your faces may not blush for shame.

This poor one cried out and the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.  
The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and he saves  
them.

Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him.  
Fear the LORD, you his holy ones;  
nothing is lacking to those who fear him.  
The rich grow poor and go hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

The righteous cry out, the LORD hears  
and he rescues them from all their afflictions.  
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted,  
saves those whose spirit is crushed.

Many are the troubles of the righteous,  
but the LORD delivers him from them all.  
The LORD is the redeemer of the souls of his  
servants;  
and none are condemned who take refuge in him.

It would be appropriate if one of the people present could give a testimony about his or her service for the poor, emphasizing the spiritual aspect. Alternatively, one of the following passages could be used for a group reflection.

## **L./ From Pope Francis' Message for the Eighth World Day of the Poor (Nos. 5-6)**

In this year dedicated to prayer, we need to make the prayer of the poor our own and pray together with them ... All of this requires a humble heart, one that has the courage to become a beggar. A heart that is ready to acknowledge itself as poor and needy. Indeed, there is a correlation between poverty, humility and trust. The truly poor person is the humble one, as the holy Bishop Augustine said: "The poor have nothing to be proud of, the rich must combat their pride. Therefore, listen to me: be truly poor, be virtuous, be humble" (Sermons, 14, 4). The humble have nothing to boast of and nothing to claim; they know they cannot rely on themselves but firmly believe they can appeal to God's merciful love, standing before him like the prodigal son who returns home repentant to receive the father's embrace (cf. Lk 15:11-24). The poor, having nothing to rely on, receive strength from God and place all their trust in him. Indeed, humility generates trust that God will never abandon us and will never leave us without a response. To the poor who dwell in our cities and are part of our communities, I say: do not lose this certainty! God is attentive to each of you and is close to you. He does not forget you nor could he ever do so. We all have had the experience of prayers that seem to remain unanswered. Sometimes we ask to be freed from a misery that makes us suffer and humiliates us, and God seems not to hear our cry. However, God's silence does not mean he is inattentive to our sufferings; rather, it contains a word that must be received with trust, surrendering ourselves to him and to his will. Sirach again attests to this: the Lord's judgment will be in favour of the poor (cf. Sir 21:5). From poverty, therefore, the song of the most genuine hope can spring up.

## **L./ Testimony on the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta**

It was evening in Calcutta. Mother Teresa, as every day, had not stopped loving and giving tender care to her poor. She sees a poor woman and approaches her. With her usual tenderness she raises the few rags that covered a devastated body. Oh, Lord, what a pity! What a story of suffering is told by that gaunt body, full of sores and wounds. Mother Teresa washes that body, but that girl's condition is desperate. Mother thinks of trying to revive her with cardiotonics, and she has a hot broth prepared. But above all, she gives her love. The poor woman fixes her eyes on those of the sister. With a whisper she says to her: "Why, why are you doing this?" and the answer is immediate, quiet: "Because I love you!" These are words that spring from a heart in love with Jesus. The face of the dying woman, almost unbelieving, is coloured with light. "Say it again!". "I love you!" "Again, say it again!" The hands of the two women are clasped. Teresa embraces her, to hear those sweet words again, the most beautiful words that a human being can hear, in her last hours. And the woman dies, knowing that she is finally loved.

*After a moment of silence for personal reflection, a hymn could be sung.*

### **Community prayer**

*C./* Let us turn to the Lord with a prayerful cry, pleading for mercy because we have caused and ignored situations of poverty. Let us pray:

*R./* **Kyrie, Kyrie eleison.**

*L./* For the faces marked by sorrow, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by marginalisation, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by injustice, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by violence, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by torture, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by imprisonment, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by war, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by the deprivation of freedom, we beseech you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by the deprivation of dignity, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by ignorance, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by illiteracy, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by health emergencies, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by unemployment, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by trafficking and slavery, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by exile, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by misery, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces marked by forced migration, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces of women, men and children exploited for vile interests, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces trampled by the perverse logic of power, we implore you. *R./*

*L./* For the faces trampled by the perverse logic of money, we implore you. *R./*

### **Invocations to Our Lady of the Poor**

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, accompany us to Jesus, the only source of grace.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, save the nations.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, comfort the sick.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, alleviate suffering.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, pray for each one of us.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, we believe in you.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, believe in us.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, we pray much.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, give us your blessing.

*L./* Virgin of the Poor, Mother of the Saviour, Mother of God, thank you!

*C./* Virgin of the Poor, we present to you our intentions that you may intercede with the Lord, obtaining for us, according to his will and through your maternal mediation, every grace and blessing.

*R./* Amen.

## **Our Father**

C./ "When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters" (*Pope Francis*). For this, we pray together [singing]: **Our Father...**

## **Eucharistic Blessing**

At the end of adoration, the priest or deacon approaches the altar; *Tantum ergo* or another appropriate hymn is sung. Meanwhile, the minister, kneeling, incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Then he rises and says:

### **Let us pray.**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
who in the wondrous sacrament of the Eucharist  
have left us the memorial of your Passover,  
grant that we may adore with living faith the holy  
mystery of your Body and Blood,  
that we may always feel in ourselves the benefits of redemption.  
You are God, who live and reign with God the Father,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
forever and ever.

**R./ Amen.**

The presider gives the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

## **The Divine Praises**

If deemed appropriate, the Divine Praises may be said after the Eucharistic blessing, according to local customs:

Blessed be God.  
Blessed be his holy Name.  
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.  
Blessed be the Name of Jesus.  
Blessed be his most Sacred Heart.  
Blessed be his most Precious Blood.  
Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the altar.  
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.  
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.  
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.  
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.  
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.  
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse.  
Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

## **Reposition**

When the blessing is finished, the priest or deacon who gave the blessing, or another priest or deacon, places the Blessed Sacrament back in the tabernacle and genuflects. While placing the Blessed Sacrament back in the tabernacle, a Marian Antiphon, such as the *Salve Regina*, or another appropriate hymn is sung.

# INSPIRATIONAL SAINTS



## SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA

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Birth: 26 August 1910, Skopje

Death: 5 September 1997, Calcutta

Canonization: 4 September 2016 by Pope Francis

Buried in the mother house of the Missionaries of Charity, Calcutta

In this context, it is beautiful to recall the testimony left to us by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a woman who gave her life for the poor. Saint Teresa continually repeated that it was from prayer that she drew the strength and faith for her mission of service to the least among us. When she spoke at the General Assembly of the UN on October 26, 1985, showing everyone the rosary she always held in her hand, she said: 'I am only a poor sister who prays. By praying, Jesus puts his love in my heart, and I go to give it to all the poor I meet along the way. Pray too! Pray, and you will notice the poor who are beside you. Perhaps on the same floor in your apartment building. Perhaps even in your houses, someone is waiting for your love. Pray, and your eyes will open, and your heart will fill with love'.

(Message, No. 8)



## SAINT BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE

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Birth: 26 March 1748, Amettes

Death: 16 April 1783, Rome

Canonization: 8 December 1881 by Pope Leo XIII

Buried in the parish church of Santa Maria ai Monti, Rome

How can we not recall here in the city of Rome, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-1783), whose body rests and is venerated in the parish church of Santa Maria ai Monti. A pilgrim from France to Rome, rejected by many monasteries, he spent the last years of his life poor among the poor, spending hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, with the rosary, reciting the breviary, reading the New Testament and the Imitation of Christ. Having no place to stay, he usually slept in a corner of the ruins of the Colosseum like a 'vagabond of God,' making his life a ceaseless prayer that rose up to God.

*(Message, No. 8)*





# PRAYER

## INSPIRED BY POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE FOR THE EIGHTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

*O God of peace, our Father, You know the sufferings of Your children, for You are attentive and caring toward all. No one is excluded from Your heart, since, before You, we are all in need. You call us to be Your instruments for the liberation and betterment of the poor, so that they may be fully integrated into society.*

*O Lord Jesus, who first stood in solidarity with the lowliest, teach us to listen to the prayer of the poor. Help us to place ourselves at their service, giving a voice to the response of Your Father and ours, who never abandons those who turn to Him.*

*O Holy Spirit, giver of life, make us vigilant and persevering in prayer so that we may welcome and embrace the poor, recognizing and serving Christ in them.*

*O Blessed Mary, Mother of God, Virgin of the Poor, since God has looked upon Your humble poverty, accomplishing great things by Your obedience, we entrust our prayer to You, convinced that it will rise to heaven and be heard.*

*O St. Benedict Joseph Labre, "vagabond of God," poor among the poor, who made of Your existence an unceasing prayer ascending up to Him, pray for us, that we too may pray and love.*

*O St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who drew strength and faith from prayer for Your mission of service to the lowliest, pray for us, that Jesus may pour His love into our hearts, that we may give it to the poor we meet on our journey. Amen.  
Alleluia!*

# VIII WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

To the poor who dwell in our cities  
and are part of our communities,  
I say: do not lose this certainty!  
God is attentive to each of you  
and is close to you.  
He does not forget you  
nor could he ever do so.

*Franciscus*



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