



# SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

«Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor»

(Tb 4,7)

*Handout*



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



«Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor»

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«Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor»

(Tb 4,7)

As always, Pope Francis chose a text of great inspiration for the SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR: «Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor» (Tob. 4:7). The expression is taken from the book of Tobit, a text that is perhaps little known, but which contains a teaching of great relevance, above all because it is the spiritual testament a father leaves to his son. He transmits in it his most important teachings - those that cannot be forgotten. Among these is the special concern for the poor, a concern that touches every single person.

Tobit specifically says, «Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor». These words were explained in Pope Francis' Message, which was published in preparation for the SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR on June 13, 2023. Now they are further reflected upon in this *Pastoral Resource Handout* that is placed in the hands of God's people, so that the World Day may be a permanent provocation for our communities to be attentive and welcoming to those in greatest need and difficulty.

As Pope Francis writes: «Everyone is our neighbour. Regardless of the colour of their skin, their social standing, the place from which they came, if I myself am poor, I can recognize my brothers or sisters in need of my help. We are called to acknowledge every poor person and every form of poverty, abandoning the indifference and the banal excuses we make to protect our illusory well-being» (No. 3). The Pope emphasizes that the poor are not a statistic. They are people who first and foremost desire our closeness and sense of humanity. The WORLD DAY OF THE POOR therefore, does not stop at a sporadic gesture of generosity, but invites us further, to let our conscience be challenged. We are urged to come out of individualism, which locks us up in ourselves, in order to understand the deep needs of the brother or sister beside me, in the light of God's presence.

The *Message* emphasizes a few categories of "poverty" to which attention is often not paid. The Pope brings to mind the instrumentalisation of rising prices of consumer goods necessary for daily life, which negatively affects families, often leading them to have to make dramatic choices. Also emerging from here is the special attention to the world of work that is so often neglected while it increasingly requires a call for justice and consistent and effective legislation. A particularly novel element is expressed by the Message's mention of the world of youth.

This *Pastoral Resource Handout* is proposed as a simple tool offered to dioceses, parishes and all the various ecclesial realities, to prepare for and to celebrate the SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR, so that it may once again be a powerful moment in which to turn our gaze more and more toward the poor, to listen to their voice, and to not fail to show them our closeness. 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.

✠ Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect for the Dicastery for Evangelization

Section for the Fundamental Questions Regarding Evangelization in the World

*«When speaking of the poor, it is easy to fall into rhetorical excess. It is also an insidious temptation to remain at the level of statistics and numbers. The poor are persons; they have faces, stories, hearts and souls. They are our brothers and sisters, with good points and bad, like all of us, and it is important to enter into a personal relation with each of them. The Book of Tobit teaches us to be realistic and practical in whatever we do with and for the poor».*

(Pope Francis)

This is the great challenge we receive from the Holy Father in his Message for the SEVENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR. Theoretical speeches or beautiful words in the face of the poor are not enough; we need the concreteness of human gestures towards real people. The legacy that Sacred Scripture gives us, in the “spiritual testament” of old Tobias, is precisely this: the invitation addressed to each person to involve themselves in the lives of their

brothers and sisters who are in situations of poverty, through simple, everyday gestures.

In the Gospel, it is precisely Jesus who teaches us that in every poor person He Himself is present and therefore assures us, «[W]hatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me» (Mt. 25:40). Indeed, as Pope Francis writes, «whenever we encounter a poor person, we cannot look away, for that would prevent us from encountering the face of the Lord Jesus». Just as the Lord does not turn his gaze away from any poor person, so each of us is invited to do the same toward our brothers and sisters. Let us try, on the occasion of this WORLD DAY OF THE POOR to imitate God’s own way.

We propose and encourage the following initiatives in dioceses, parishes and different communities, which can be reconfigured according to the sensitivities and needs particular to 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.

### Preparing with Prayer:

- Have a prayer vigil on the evening of Saturday, November 18, with members and volunteers of charitable associations and groups operating in the community. Involve those who are helped by them as well.
- 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 neediest 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.



### **Living in the Liturgy:**

- Emphasize the occasion of the WORLD DAY OF THE POOR during the week of November 13-18 by remembering the poor in the community in the intentions of the weekday Masses and inviting everyone to the activities.
- 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 needy people to that Sunday's 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.



### **Acting with Charitable Works:**

- Accept the invitation made by the Holy Father to «share our Sunday dinner, after sharing in the Eucharistic Table ... 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 centers, 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 needy families, 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.



### António Lourenço

In November of 2018 I was in Bangladesh, and one of the realities that most surprised me and touched my conscience and heart was the number of children working and begging on the streets.

Given the poverty of the general population, there are many children who are forced to work to help support themselves and their families, if they have any. There is no need to go looking for them in the factories where the various brands of clothes we often buy and wear are produced. One only has to walk down the street in a large Bangladeshi city to be immediately approached by a five/six-year-old girl selling bead or shell necklaces, a seven/eight-year-old boy selling coffee on the beach or offering to massage your back in exchange for a few cents, a ten-year-old boy carrying tourists' heavy bags, a fourteen-year-old boy driving a "tom-tom" (Bengali rickshaw) or a sixteen-year-old boy acting as a tour guide in exchange for a few tips.

There are children both healthy and malnourished, others with mental or motor disabilities, and even infants in the arms of their mothers or older siblings. All of them make the street their source of income and often their home.

I realize how privileged I am and how easy it would have been for me to end up in that situation. In fact, I still cannot answer the question that always follows me, "Why isn't that me there?" I don't think I will be able to find an answer, because the truth is that it could very well be me. It is with this knowledge that I try to approach any mission/service to the underprivileged, knowing that the good that can be done through me, on the one hand, is not by my own merit and, on the other hand, is much more Justice than Mercy. In time, the question "why not me?" may be replaced by "why me?". As a Christian and a physician, helping to restore Justice has been one of my greatest motivations for working with the most vulnerable communities and populations, such as migrants and refugees. I know I cannot change the world or the great injustices I come into contact with, but I know I can do my part and try to be as just as I can. It is the least I can do.

I am also greatly helped by the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Nothing was done on her own merit, but rather everything was due to her complete and total availability for whatever Love wanted to make of her. And Love accomplished everything.



*«We must therefore ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the Kingdom? ... The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words».*

(St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 50)

## Joseph, Fratello Association

I am 31 years old, and I work with the Fratello Association, which seeks to respond to Pope Francis' call, «How I would like a Church that is poor and is for the poor!» We organize festive and prayer events with the poor all over the world.

When we come into contact with vulnerable people, all masks fall off and relationships become simpler and more authentic. Together, we experience walking alongside the most fragile: in this way, each of us is available to the other, available to love and to be loved. In this openness, I discovered that the poor do not only have much to receive, but also much to give!



All of them have great talents: Jacinthe dances hip-hop, Nikolai is a magic trick champion, Ludo has a great sense of humor... Everyone feels valued and occupies their rightful place. My memory is filled with the many faces of those who have become free: it is priceless!

This quality of relating to the most vulnerable people has made me realize that we are all poor ... and that this poverty is actually richness - a gift to others! I am happy to have experienced the following: «Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven» (Matt. 5:3).

These numerous deep encounters have been a way for me to encounter Jesus. I cannot encounter Jesus without being visited by one of my own brothers. Thank you, Lord, for walking with us along the path of life, in so many different faces!



### P. Robert Conroy, MC

It has been 26 years since the death of St. Teresa of Calcutta, and we, the Missionaries of Charity, work hard each day to follow her heroic and charitable example. In our service of the poor, we have taken to heart Pope Francis' injunction to «go to the peripheries, which are often filled with loneliness, sadness, inner wounds and loss of the zest for life» (Pope Francis, Address to the “La-

zare” Association, August 28, 2021), because his words reflect our own charism so closely. Mother Teresa understood that in love there are no barriers or limits, and that to serve Jesus, suffering in the poorest of the poor, we will have to take risks and conquer our human fears!



In Mexico City we oversee a soup kitchen for homeless men called “Casa Madre Teresa” near the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. During the pandemic, we went from serving around 75 men per day up to almost 700 each day because we decided to continue feeding the poor while other aid centers in the city were shutting down. It was a frightening time for the homeless because they had nowhere to turn for assistance. In the same building, we also host a small community of homeless men who help us in our service, as well as a few volunteers and several permanent workers. Even though we were not set up as a night shelter, we would periodically take in hardship cases from the street for a day or two.



Tragically, one night a very young and mentally unstable guest killed one of our faithful volunteers for no apparent reason. Daniel, our helper, was in his late 50's and had difficulties in walking, but he would sit outside near the table where we would distribute food each day and give out bread and a kind word to each man. He loved to have personal contact with every homeless person and would inevitably draw a smile or good-natured joke from those hardened and wounded souls. We struggled for months to understand why the Lord allowed this tragedy to happen in our home. Mother Teresa said: «You have been made to love and to be loved. That's why it is so wrong not to love. And that's the most beautiful thing that the human being has or can give: Love» (*Mother Teresa. Where There Is Love, There Is God.* Ed. Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C. New York: Doubleday, 2010, p.8). Daniel touched the broken peripheries of humanity each



day with love and compassion, and he was a witness of charity until death. May his example inspire us to «love until it hurts».

## The Example of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus

*On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus' birth, let us learn from her how to become poor in spirit. Jesus called them blessed (see Matt. 5:3). From her we learn that the true poor person is the one who lives in the joy of inner freedom. They know that nothing belongs to them, everything has been received as a gift and therefore, they can freely let go of everything. From this poverty springs true hope because the poor person, having nothing to lean on, places all their trust in God alone. In Him they hope for everything and receive everything as a gift of love. They know how to distinguish the essential from the accessory because in their poverty, they have learned that the only thing truly necessary is to love and to know that they are infinitely loved.*

«Since my clothing day I had received abundant lights on religious perfection, chiefly concerning the vow of poverty. Whilst I was a postulant I liked to have nice things to use and to find everything needful ready to hand. ... One evening after Compline I searched in vain for our lamp on the shelves where they are kept, and, as it was the time of the "Great Silence," I could not recover it. I guessed rightly that a Sister, believing it to be her own, had taken it; but just on that evening I had counted much on doing some work, and was I to spend a whole hour in the dark on account of this mistake? Without the interior light of grace I should undoubtedly have pitied myself, but, with that light, I felt happy instead of aggrieved, and reflected that poverty consists in being deprived not only of what is convenient, but of what is necessary. And, in this exterior darkness, I found my soul illumined by a brightness that was divine. At this time I was seized with a craving for whatever was ugly and inconvenient; and was thus quite pleased when a pretty little jug was taken from our cell and a large chipped one put in its place ...

There is no joy equal to that which is shared by the truly poor in spirit. If they ask with detachment for something necessary, and not only is it refused, but an attempt is made to take away what they already possess, they are following the Master's advice: "If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." To give up one's cloak is, it seems to me, to renounce every right, and to regard oneself as the servant, the slave, of all. Without a cloak it is easier to walk or run, and so the Master adds: "And whosoever shall force thee to go one mile, go with him other two." It is therefore not enough for me to give to whoever asks—I ought to anticipate the wish, and show myself glad to be of service; but if anything of mine be



taken away, I should show myself glad to be rid of it. ... Dear Mother ... I am far from living up to my ideal, and yet the very desire to do so gives me a feeling of peace».

(SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX, *Story of a soul*).



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## **Prayer Inspired by the Holy Father Francis' Message for the VII World Day of the Poor**

*Oh Lord Jesus Christ* crucified and risen, with joy we gather around Your Table to receive anew from You the gift and the commitment to live in poverty and to serve the poor, in whom we encounter Your face.

We thank You that there are so many men and women who live out their dedication to the poor and marginalized and share with them, paying attention to the holistic uplifting of their person. Your Kingdom is made present and visible in this generous and free service.

Enlighten public institutions so that they do their duty well, guaranteeing to human beings the right to life, physical integrity, indispensable means for a dignified standard of living, the right to security in case of illness, disability, widowhood, old age, or unemployment.

*Oh Holy Spirit*, who give us discernment, under Your guidance may we recognize the true needs of our poor brothers and sisters. Make us able to lend them our voice in their causes, welcoming the mysterious wisdom You wish to communicate to us through them who are children of God.

*Oh St. Therese of the Child Jesus*, may the tenacity of your love inspire our hearts, helping us to not turn our gaze away from the poor, but to keep it always fixed on the human and divine face of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Alleluia!



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«Whenever we encounter a poor person,  
we cannot look away, for that would prevent us  
from encountering the face of the Lord Jesus»

*Franciscus*



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