

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

**JESUS CHRIST BECAME
POOR FOR YOUR SAKE**

SIXTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR
13 NOVEMBER 2022

PASTORAL RESOURCE

Saint Paul

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Sixth World Day of the Poor

Jesus Christ became poor for your sake

Presentation

«Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated». Pope Francis' words in his Message for the upcoming *World Day of the Poor* are strikingly clear. It is a challenge to those who are especially concerned about their brothers and sisters who are living with various forms of hardship. We know people who have decided to dedicate their lives to the poor. In their daily commitment, these people are very aware of what it means to become poor with the poor. Rhetoric disappears and gives way to involvement and sharing. This is the choice made by those who understand what the Christian life is all about. Faced with those who plead for help, you do not call others to help, rather you roll up your sleeves and get involved.

The motto chosen for this year is distinctly Christological and bears a message that helps us to reflect first-hand. *Jesus Christ became poor for your sake!* To look away from this is to fail to understand or to misunderstand the whole gospel. The apostle places the mystery of the incarnation within the Son of God's choice of poverty made in order to enable the poor to recover their lost wealth. We are those poor people, no one is excluded. Poverty is not just one of the many words in the Gospels. Paul puts it above all others because he sees it as the foundational expression of God's Trinitarian love. The power of love for all humanity lost in the pursuit of the superfluous leads the Son of God to become man, taking upon himself the poverty of human nature. To accept this mystery will always remain the greatest challenge in history.

In a culture that usually equates the highpoint of happiness with attaining material wealth and fleeting success, this Gospel teaching seems so far out that it is considered quasi - if not completely - ridiculous. It is easy to pin poverty on those who have fallen into destitution because of injustice and selfishness. Yet it is precisely there where the world marginalizes, that God has chosen to make His home. His is true sharing and partaking because he did not ask others to become poor with the poor. There is no alternative: only to the extent that each person becomes truly aware that they themselves are poor can they understand that Jesus takes part in their life experience and saves them. Keeping the commandments, like the rich young man in the parable, is certainly worthy of praise and deserves respect. Following Christ by leaving everything behind requires the power of grace that is at work precisely when we accept that we are poor and in need of being led by the Spirit who gives us the strength.

The upcoming *World Day of the Poor*, therefore, is an invitation that challenges us to become aware of our own situation. At the same time, it urges us to personally make a commitment to serve those who do not have even the minimum necessary to live with dignity. In recent months, our communities have made a concerted effort to provide hospitality to the many Ukrainian people who have been forced to flee the scourge of war. Many of these are children who will be scarred for life by the war and have had to go into exile. We must continue to offer Christian solidarity, while also keeping in mind the other forms of poverty that surround us.

This *Pastoral Resource* seeks to unite prayer with the action needed so that the *World Day* does not go by without having left a tangible sign of personal involvement and a spirit of sharing in the name of faith that becomes charity and gives hope.

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Message of His Holiness Pope Francis For the Sixth World Day of the Poor

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

13 November 2022

For your sakes Christ became poor (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)

1. “Jesus Christ... for your sakes became poor” (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). With these words, the Apostle Paul addresses the first Christians of Corinth in order to encourage their efforts to show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in need. The World Day of the Poor comes this year as a healthy challenge, helping us to reflect on our style of life and on the many forms of poverty all around us.

Several months ago, the world was emerging from the tempest of the pandemic, showing signs of an economic recovery that could benefit millions of people reduced to poverty by the loss of their jobs. A patch of blue sky was opening that, without detracting from our sorrow at the loss of our dear ones, promised to bring us back to direct interpersonal relations and to socializing with one another once more without further prohibitions or restrictions. Now, however, a new catastrophe has appeared on the horizon, destined to impose on our world a very different scenario.

The war in Ukraine has now been added to the regional wars that for years have taken a heavy toll of death and destruction. Yet here the situation is even more complex due to the direct intervention of a “superpower” aimed at imposing its own will in violation of the principle of the self-determination of peoples. Tragic scenarios are being reenacted and once more reciprocal extortionate demands made by a few potentates are stifling the voice of a humanity that cries out for peace.

2. What great poverty is produced by the senselessness of war! Wherever we look, we can see how violence strikes those who are defenseless and vulnerable. We think of the deportation of thousands of persons, above all young boys and girls, in order to sever their roots and impose on them another identity. Once more the words of the Psalmist prove timely. Contemplating the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Hebrew youth, he sang: “By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors for mirth... How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” (Ps 137:1-4).

Millions of women, children and elderly people are being forced to brave the danger of bombs just to find safety by seeking refuge as displaced persons in neighbouring countries. How many others remain in the war zones, living each day with fear and the lack of food, water, medical care and above all human affections? In these situations, reason is darkened and those who feel its effects are the countless ordinary people who end up being added to the already great

numbers of those in need. How can we respond adequately to this situation, and to bring relief and peace to all these people in the grip of uncertainty and instability?

3. In this situation of great conflict, we are celebrating the Sixth World Day of the Poor. We are asked to reflect on the summons of the Apostle to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for [our] sakes became poor, so that by his poverty [we] might become rich” (cf. 2 *Cor* 8:9). During his visit to Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter, James and John, who had urged him not to forget the poor. The community of Jerusalem was experiencing great hardship due to a food shortage in the country. The Apostle immediately set about organizing a great collection to aid the poverty-stricken. The Christians of Corinth were very understanding and supportive. At Paul’s request, on every first day of the week they collected what they were able to save and all proved very generous.

From that time on, every Sunday, during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, we have done the same thing, pooling our offerings so that the community can provide for the needs of the poor. It is something that Christians have always done with joy and a sense of responsibility, to ensure that none of our brothers or sisters will lack the necessities of life. We find a confirmation of this from Saint Justin Martyr, who wrote in the second century to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and described the Sunday celebration of Christians. In his words, “On Sunday we have a common assembly for all our members, whether they live in the city or in the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time... The Eucharist is distributed, everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent. The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution, and they themselves decide the amount. The collection is placed in the custody of the presider, who uses it to help the orphans and widows and all who for any reason are in distress, whether because they are sick, imprisoned, or away from home. In a word, care is provided to all who are in need” (*First Apology*, LXVII, 1-6).

4. As for the community of Corinth, after the initial outburst of enthusiasm, their commitment began to falter and the initiative proposed by the Apostle lost some of its impetus. For this reason, Paul wrote them, asking in impassioned terms that they relaunch the collection, “so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means” (2 *Cor* 8:11).

I think at this time of the generosity that in recent years has led entire populations to open their doors to welcome millions of refugees from wars in the Middle East, Central Africa and now Ukraine. Families have opened their homes to make room for other families, and communities have generously accepted many women and children in order to enable them to live with the dignity that is their due. Even so, the longer conflicts last, the more burdensome their consequences become. The peoples who offer welcome find it increasingly difficult to maintain their relief efforts; families and communities begin to feel burdened by a situation that continues past the emergency stage. This is the moment for us not to lose heart but to renew our initial motivation. The work we have begun needs to be brought to completion with the same sense of responsibility.

5. That, in effect, is precisely what solidarity is: sharing the little we have with those who have nothing, so that no one will go without. The sense of community and of communion as a style of life increases and a sense of solidarity matures. We should also consider that in some countries, over the past decades, families have experienced a significant increase in affluence and security.

This is a positive result of private initiatives and favouring economic growth as well as concrete incentives to support families and social responsibility. The benefits in terms of security and stability can now be shared with those who have been forced to leave behind their homes and native countries in search of safety and survival. As members of civil society, let us continue to uphold the values of freedom, responsibility, fraternity and solidarity. And as Christians, let us always make charity, faith and hope the basis of our lives and our actions.

6. It is interesting to observe that the Apostle does not desire to oblige Christians to perform works of charity: “I do not say this as a command” (2 *Cor* 8:8). Paul is instead “testing the genuineness of [their] love” by earnestness of [their] concern for the poor (ibid.). Certainly, Paul’s request is prompted by the need for concrete assistance; nonetheless, his desire is much more profound. He asks the Corinthians to take up the collection so that it can be a sign of love, the love shown by Jesus himself. In a word, generosity towards the poor has its most powerful motivation in the example of the Son of God, who chose to become poor.

Indeed, the Apostle makes it clear that this example on the part of Christ, this “dispossession”, is a grace: “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 *Cor* 8:9). Only by accepting it can we give concrete and consistent expression to our faith. The teaching of the entire New Testament is unanimous in this regard. Paul’s teaching finds an echo in the words of the apostle James: “Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in the mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing” (*Jas* 1:22-25).

7. Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated. At times, however, a kind of laxity can creep in and lead to inconsistent behaviour, including indifference about the poor. It also happens that some Christians, out of excessive attachment to money, remain mired in a poor use of their goods and wealth. These situations reveal a weak faith and feeble, myopic hope.

We know that the issue is not money itself, for money is part of our daily life as individuals and our relationships in society. Rather, what we need to consider is the value that we put on money: it cannot become our absolute and chief purpose in life. Attachment to money prevents us from seeing everyday life with realism; it clouds our gaze and blinds us to the needs of others.

Nothing worse could happen to a Christian and to a community than to be dazzled by the idol of wealth, which ends up chaining us to an ephemeral and bankrupt vision of life.

It is not a question, then, of approaching the poor with a “welfare mentality”, as often happens, but of ensuring that no one lacks what is necessary. It is not activism that saves, but sincere and generous concern that makes us approach a poor person as a brother or sister who lends a hand to help me shake off the lethargy into which I have fallen. Consequently, “no one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas. This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles... None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2011). There is an urgent need to find new solutions that can go beyond the approach of those social policies conceived as “a policy *for* the poor, but never *with* the poor and never *of* the poor, much less part of a project that brings people together” (*Fratelli*

Tutti, 169). We need instead to imitate the attitude of the Apostle, who could write to the Corinthians: “I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance” (2 *Cor* 8:13).

8. There is a paradox that today, as in the past, we find hard to accept, for it clashes with our human way of thinking: that there exists a form of poverty that can make us rich. By appealing to the “grace” of Jesus Christ, Paul wants to confirm the message that he himself preached. It is the message that true wealth does not consist in storing up “treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal” (*Mt* 6:19), but rather in a reciprocal love that leads us to bear one another’s burdens in such a way that no one is left behind or excluded. The sense of weakness and limitation that we have experienced in these recent years, and now the tragedy of the war with its global repercussions, must teach us one crucial thing: we are not in this world merely to survive, but to live a dignified and happy life. The message of Jesus shows us the way and makes us realize that there is a poverty that humiliates and kills, and another poverty, Christ’s own poverty, that sets us free and brings us peace.

The poverty that kills is squalor, the daughter of injustice, exploitation, violence and the unjust distribution of resources. It is a hopeless and implacable poverty, imposed by the throwaway culture that offers neither future prospects nor avenues of escape. It is a squalor that not only reduces people to extreme material poverty, but also corrodes the spiritual dimension, which, albeit often overlooked, is nonetheless still there and still important. When the only law is the bottom line of profit at the end of the day, nothing holds us back from seeing others simply as objects to be exploited; other people are merely a means to an end. There no longer exist such things as a just salary or just working hours, and new forms of slavery emerge and entrap persons who lack alternatives and are forced to accept this toxic injustice simply to eke out a living.

The poverty that sets us free, on the other hand, is one that results from a responsible decision to cast off all dead weight and concentrate on what is essential. We can easily discern the lack of satisfaction that many people feel because they sense that something important is missing from their lives, with the result that they wander off aimlessly in search of it. In their desire to find something that can bring them satisfaction, they need someone to guide them towards the insignificant, the vulnerable and the poor, so that they can finally see what they themselves lack. Encountering the poor enables us to put an end to many of our anxieties and empty fears, and to arrive at what truly matters in life, the treasure that no one can steal from us: true and gratuitous love. The poor, before being the object of our almsgiving, are people, who can help set us free from the snares of anxiety and superficiality.

A Father and Doctor of the Church, Saint John Chrysostom, whose writings are filled with sharp criticisms of the conduct of Christians towards the poor, once wrote: “If you are unable to believe that poverty can make you rich, think of your Lord and stop your doubting. Had he not been poor, you would not be rich. Here is something astonishing: poverty has become the source of abundant wealth. What Paul means by “wealth” [cf. 2 *Cor* 8:9] is the knowledge of piety, purification from sin, justice, sanctification and a thousand other good things that have been given us now and always. All these things we have thanks to poverty” (*Homilies on II Corinthians*, 17, 1).

9. The words of the Apostle chosen as the theme of this year’s World Day of the Poor present this great paradox of our life of faith: Christ’s poverty makes us rich. Paul was able to present this

teaching, which the Church has spread and borne witness to over the centuries, because God himself, in his Son Jesus, chose to follow this path. Because Christ became poor for our sakes, our own lives are illumined and transformed, and take on a worth that the world does not appreciate and cannot bestow. Jesus' treasure is his love, which excludes no one and seeks out everyone, especially the marginalized and those deprived of the necessities of life. Out of love, he stripped himself of glory and took on our human condition. Out of love, he became a servant, obedient to the point of accepting death, death on a cross (cf. *Phil 2:6-8*). Out of love, he became the "bread of life" (*Jn 6:35*), so that all might have what they need and find nourishment for eternal life. Just as it was difficult for the Lord's disciples to accept this teaching (cf. *Jn 6:60*), so it is for us today as well. Yet Jesus's words are clear: if we want life to triumph over death, and dignity to be redeemed from injustice, we need to follow Christ's path of poverty, sharing our lives out of love, breaking the bread of our daily existence with our brothers and sisters, beginning with the least of them, those who lack the very essentials of life. This is the way to create equality, to free the poor from their misery and the rich from their vanity, and both from despair.

10. On 15 May last, I canonized Brother Charles de Foucauld, a man born rich, who gave up everything to follow Jesus, becoming, like him, a poor brother to all. Charles' life as a hermit, first in Nazareth and then in the Saharan desert, was one of silence, prayer and sharing, an exemplary testimony to Christian poverty. We would do well to meditate on these words of his: "Let us not despise the poor, the little ones, the workers; not only are they our brothers and sisters in God, they are also those who most perfectly imitate Jesus in his outward life. They perfectly represent Jesus, the Worker of Nazareth. They are the firstborn among the elect, the first to be called to the Saviour's crib. They were the regular company of Jesus, from his birth until his death... Let us honour them; let us honour in them the images of Jesus and his holy parents... Let us take for ourselves [the condition] that he took for himself... Let us never cease to be poor in everything, brothers and sisters to the poor, companions to the poor; may we be the poorest of the poor like Jesus, and like him love the poor and surround ourselves with them" (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Meditation 263*).^[1] For Brother Charles, those were not merely words, but a concrete way of living that led him to share with Jesus the offering of his very life.

May this 2022 *World Day of the Poor* be for us a moment of grace. May it enable us to make a personal and communal examination of conscience and to ask ourselves whether the poverty of Jesus Christ is our faithful companion in life.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 13 June 2022 Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua

FRANCIS

[1] Meditation No. 263 on *Lk 2:8-20*: C. DE FOUCAULD, *La Bonté de Dieu. Méditations sur les saints Evangiles (1)*, Nouvelle Cité, Montrouge 1996, 214-216.

Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis for the fifth World Day of the Poor

Holy Mass St Peter's Basilica
Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time, 14 November 2021

The images that Jesus uses at the beginning of today's Gospel leave us bewildered: the sun darkened, the moon no longer giving light, stars falling and the powers of heaven shaken (cf. *Mk* 13:24-25). Yet the Lord then invites us to hope, for precisely in that moment of utter darkness, the Son of Man will come (cf. v. 26). Even now, we can perceive the signs of his coming, just as the leaves that appear on the fig tree make us realize that summer is at hand (cf. v. 28).

This Gospel passage helps us to interpret history in two of its aspects: *today's pain* and *tomorrow's hope*. It evokes all those painful contradictions in which humanity in every age is immersed, and, at the same time, the future of salvation that awaits us: the encounter with the Lord who comes to set us free from all evil. Let us consider these two aspects through the eyes of Jesus.

First: *today's pain*. We are part of a history marked by tribulation, violence, suffering and injustice, ever awaiting a liberation that never seems to arrive. Those who are most wounded, oppressed and even crushed, are the poor, the weakest links in the chain. The World Day of the Poor which we are celebrating asks us not to turn aside, not to be afraid to take a close look at the suffering of those most vulnerable. Today's Gospel has much to say to them. The sun of their life is often darkened by loneliness, the moon of their expectations has waned and the stars of their dreams have fallen into gloom; their lives have been shaken. All because of the poverty into which they are often forced, victims of injustice and the inequality of a throwaway society that hurries past without seeing them and without scruple abandons them to their fate.

There is, however, another aspect: *tomorrow's hope*. Jesus wants to open our hearts to hope, to remove our anxiety and fear before the pain of the world. And so, he tells us that even as the sun grows dark and everything around us seems to be falling, he himself is drawing near. Amid the groans of our painful history, a future of salvation is beginning to blossom. Tomorrow's hope flowers amid today's pain. Indeed, God's salvation is not only a future promise, but is even now at work within our wounded history, spreading in the midst of the oppression and the injustice of our world. All of us have a wounded heart. Amid the tears of the poor, the kingdom of God is blossoming like the tender leaves of the tree and guiding history to its goal, to the final encounter with the Lord, the King of the universe who will definitively set us free.

At this point, let us ask: what is demanded of us as Christians in this situation? We are asked to *nurture tomorrow's hope by healing today's pain*. The two are linked: if you do not work to heal today's pain, it will be hard to have hope for tomorrow. The hope born of the Gospel has nothing to do with a passive expectation that things may be better tomorrow, but with making God's promise of salvation concrete today. Today and every day. Christian hope is not the naïve, even adolescent, optimism of those who hope that things may change – that won't happen – but in the meantime go on with life; it has to do with building daily, by concrete gestures, the kingdom of love, justice, and fraternity that Jesus inaugurated. Christian hope, for example, was not sown by the Levite and the

priest who walked by the man wounded by the thieves. It was sown by a stranger, a Samaritan who stopped and did that (cf. *Lk* 10:30-35). And today it is as if the Church is saying: “Stop and sow hope amid poverty. Draw near to the poor and sow hope”. Hope for that person, your hope and the hope of the Church. This is what is asked of us: to be, amid the ruins of the everyday world, tireless builders of hope; to be light as the sun grows dark, to be loving witnesses of compassion amid widespread disinterest; to be an attentive presence amid growing indifference. Witnesses of compassion. We will never be able to do good except by showing compassion. At most, we will do good things, but they do not touch the Christian way because they do not touch the heart. What touches the heart is compassion: we draw near, we feel compassion and we perform works of tender love. That is God’s way of doing things: closeness, compassion and tenderness. That is what is being asked of us today.

Recently I was thinking about what a bishop close to the poor, and himself poor in spirit, Don Tonino Bello, used to say: “We cannot be content to hope; we have to organize hope”. Unless our hope translates into decisions and concrete gestures of concern, justice, solidarity and care for our common home, the sufferings of the poor will not be relieved, the economy of waste that forces them to live on the margins will not be converted, their expectations will not blossom anew. We Christians, in particular, have to *organize hope* - this expression of Don Tonino Bello, to organize hope, is very fine – to make it concrete in our everyday lives, in our relationships, in our social and political commitments. I am reminded of the charitable works carried out by so many Christians, the work of the Office of the Papal Almoner... What are they doing there? They are organizing hope. Not giving a coin here and there, but organizing hope. This is what the Church is asking of us today.

Today Jesus offers us a simple yet eloquent image of hope. It is the image of the leaves of the fig tree, which quietly point to the approach of summer. Those leaves appear, Jesus says, when the branch becomes tender (cf. v. 28). Dear brothers and sisters, that is the word that makes hope blossom in the world and relieves the suffering of the poor: *tenderness*. Compassion that leads you to tenderness. We need to overcome our self-absorption, interior rigidity, which is the temptation nowadays, that of the “restorationists”, who want a Church completely orderly, completely rigid: this is not of the Holy Spirit. We have to overcome this, in order to make hope blossom amid this rigidity. It is up to us to overcome the temptation to be concerned only about our own problems; we need to grow tender before the tragedies of our world, to share its pain. Like the tender leaves of a tree, we are called to absorb the pollution all around us and turn it into goodness. It is useless to keep talking about problems, to argue and to be scandalized – all of us can do that. What we need to do is imitate the leaves that daily, imperceptibly, turn dirty air into clean air. Jesus wants us to be “converters” of goodness: people who breathe the same heavy air as everyone else, but respond to evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12:21). People who act: by breaking bread with the hungry, working for justice, lifting up the poor and restoring their dignity. As the Samaritan did.

How lovely, evangelical and youthful is a Church ready to go out from herself and, like Jesus, proclaim good news to the poor (cf. *Lk* 4:18). Let me pause at that last adjective: young. A Church that sows hope is young. A prophetic Church that, by her presence, says to the broken-hearted and the outcast of the world, “Take heart, the Lord is near. For you too, summer is being born in the depths of winter. From your pain, hope can arise”. Brothers and sisters, let us bring this outlook of hope to our world. Let us bring it with tenderness to the poor, with closeness, with compassion, without judging them, for we will be judged. For there, with them, with the poor, is Jesus; because there, *in them*, is Jesus, who awaits us.

Lectio divina

Lectio

2 Corinthians 8:1-24

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written,

“The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.”

But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill. We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of others. And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

The collection for the poor and the exemplary nature of Christ

The series of letters that make up the background of 2 Cor 8:9 is anything but calm. Paul is faced with one of the most difficult ecclesial "problems" tormenting his heart as a father and teacher. It is related to the

collection to be given to the "saints of the church in Jerusalem". The style of his letters is clearly diatribe, a typical argumentative method, which was used in the ancient schools of rhetoric. This style is reinforced by a clear stand taken by Paul: to encourage the conversion of his audience and to support their growth in faith and their gradual embrace of the Christian message. There is no lack of use of this argumentative style in the second letter to the Corinthians. It stems from re-establishing the relationship between Paul and the community. This renewed relationship showed an obvious and easeful reconciliation. The accusations ruthlessly levelled against the Apostle of "bargaining" with the Word of God and of living in a kind of schizophrenic way - forceful in writing and unpretentious when present - made by a self-proclaimed and anonymous "enemy" who crept into the fold of the Corinthian communities, seem to have been completely counteracted. The mediation of Titus, a valiant and tireless collaborator, was beneficial, and the grace of forgiveness overcame the storm winds that threatened to undermine the foundations of a community to which more than a year of missionary work and four epistles had been dedicated, of which only two are preserved in the Scriptures. Once the trust relationship with the Corinthians had been re-established following the consoling news brought to him by Titus (cf. 2 Cor 7:5-16), Paul was able to urge them to resume the collection that had been interrupted the previous year (cf. 2 Cor 8:10).

The exhortation does not proceed in the usual manner from the general to the specific, but rather from the specific of organizing the collection (cf. 2 Cor 8:1-24) to the general of its spiritual merit (cf. 2 Cor 9:11-15). The end of the section, with the final thanksgiving, anticipates the Jerusalem community's gratitude for the gift of the collection, regardless of the outcome that the Pauline exhortation will engender in the Corinthians. But what is this all about? What is the purpose of the collection? For whom was it intended?

The Pauline definition is that of *logeia*, that is, "collection" (from the Greek *legein* = to gather). However, he prefers synonyms that are useful alternative words to raise its meaning: eulogy (cf. 2 Cor 9:5, 5, 6), *charis* (cf. 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 8:6), *koinōnia* (cf. 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13), *diakonia* (cf. Rom 15:31), *dikaiosynē* (2 Cor 9:4), *leitourgia* (cf. 2 Cor 9:12), *haplotēs* (2 Cor 8:2), *agapē* (cf. 2 Cor 8:24). The emphasis on the translation of the term "collection" and its theological meaning suggests that for Paul it is an action of grace and blessing and for that reason marks a decisive turning point in the continuation of his mission. The Apostle capitalizes on this work of grace that is not unknown to the Corinthians. They, in fact, have already experienced, not in an ideological sense, the value of the collection as an action that concretizes the sharing of God's wealth, assumed by Christ in a paradoxical way. The text is presented from its very beginning with a deliberately illogical remark: how is it possible that Jesus Christ, stripped of his original wealth, could make us rich through the offering of his poverty? In the same letter in chapter 5:21, the paradoxical nature of Christ is correlated to the sin condition; He, who had not known sin, was made a sinner by God so that in the destruction of sin, which came about through his shameful death, every man, restored to the redeeming mystery of grace, might become the righteousness of God. The point of reference for every believer can be grasped in Christ. The possibility of imitating Christ's love is played out in reference to one's neighbor. The paradox of enriching poverty finds a rational solution on this level. For just as Christ's love reaches the agapic level and is made manifest through every man, so does the love one has for one's neighbor reach the heights of that divine love because it is modeled after the example of Jesus, who impoverished himself in order to enrich, even to the point of total self-giving. Ultimately, it is possible to discern a common reference in Christ's and in every believer's way of loving.

St. Paul demonstrates this to the Corinthians through the rhetorical device of an imperceptible but crucial addition: "for you" (cf. v. 9). The overabundance of charity starts from the disadvantage of a paradoxical poverty that is enriched in the dynamic of giving. By tapping into and embracing the poverty of others, this takes on greater meaning and prepares one to share the same poverty, turning it into wealth for others. Upon this Christological example, Paul builds the framework that underpins the recommendation to the Corinthians to complete the collection they had undertaken the previous year. The other example, namely that of the charity of the Macedonians, is also useful in this sense. Paul uses this to reiterate the point of his appeal «they gave themselves first to the Lord» (cf. v. 5) and, in obedience to God, made themselves available to Paul and his co-workers. Consequently, it is not the amount of the Corinthians' gift that determines the economic fate of the poorer brethren in the Church of Jerusalem, but its quality. The Apostle

deliberately emphasizes that the churches of Macedonia are communities particularly «afflicted, tried and in extreme poverty» (cf. v. 2). The foundation of the principle of Christian solidarity lays not so much on the lavish handouts of wealthy people, but on the joyful sacrifice of those who face stringent economic insecurity on a daily basis. The Macedonian churches are made up of poor people helping other poor people. Solidarity thus understood generates a culture of closeness that rests on the ecclesiological principle of social equality. It is rooted in the episode of the gift of manna recounted in Exodus, bestowed by God to the extent that was needed but not in excess. With this in mind, the Pauline exhortation addressed to the Corinthians fosters the value of solidarity and fulfills the primacy of the common good that aims at offsetting economic imbalances and curbing the culture of waste, so as to encourage an ethic of closeness that alleviates suffering, heals wounds, restores lost dignity, and becomes a holy place where one can encounter God's presence. The abiding theological sense in every gesture of solidarity resolves the problem of part-time charity.

On the last World Day for the Poor, Pope Francis stressed that the poor are not people «outside our communities, but brothers and sisters whose sufferings we should share, in an effort to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization, restore their lost dignity and ensure their necessary social inclusion. On the other hand, as we know, acts of charity presuppose a giver and a receiver, whereas mutual sharing generates fraternity. Almsgiving is occasional; mutual sharing, on the other hand, is enduring. The former risks gratifying those who perform it and can prove demeaning for those who receive it; the latter strengthens solidarity and lays the necessary foundations for achieving justice».

This qualitative urgency involves acts of solidarity that our church communities are called upon to implement. The ecclesial practices that inspire the workings of Caritas must be patterned after the Pauline model of *imitatio Christi*. Only by looking at the Christological example does it become possible to grasp in acts of fraternal solidarity the signs of the presence of Christ who humbles himself by lowering himself to the levels of extreme poverty, even to the point of enriching with his poverty the destitute and needy of every time and place. Along these lines is included the generous work of many faithful who in keeping with the Gospel adage of silent and discreet charity (cf. Mt 6:3) devotedly offer financial support to those who lack the necessities to meet basic living expenses. The promotion of shared shopping in large stores, as well as in small retail outlets, is spreading. It is beneficial for several reasons: it involves everyone, believers and non-believers alike, it requires a small number of staff, and achieves the goal of educating people about solidarity very quickly.

In recent years, there has been an increasingly urgent demand for the presence of Caritas soup kitchens and shelters that support local institutions in combating the consequences of hunger, poverty and associated social afflictions. What is important is to preserve the dignity of the person, supporting this with the selfless action of so many lay people, joined by priests, and religious men and women, who give themselves selflessly and enthusiastically in a clear witness of evangelical solidarity.

Raising the awareness of offerings to be given to the needy both near and far has long been part of the ordinary guidelines of pastoral ministry in the church. This opens one to discovering a real school that educates and encourages one to ascertain in love and in sincere giving what it really means to be a believing and credible Christian.

By quickly reviewing the main actions of Christian charity, it is possible to see the relevance of Paul's exhortation to the believers in Corinth. By reformulating its contents and updating it to our historical and social setting, the value of the collection is still relevant and indisputable. The Church must continue to faithfully proclaim the Gospel to the poor, raising the awareness of believers to rediscover the heart of Christ's message in solidarity. Every pastoral endeavor must conform to his example because «He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness» (cf. 2 Cor 9:10). Ultimately, we need to rely on the promise of the inestimable wealth we receive from the Lord more than on the willingness of our meager giving.

Psalm 113

HYMN TO GOD, LOVING TOWARD THE POOR

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD;
praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time on and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the LORD is to be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,

who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?

He raises the poor from the dust,
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.

He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the Lord!

Theological-pastoral commentary

The poor man's grace

In 2015, the United Nations set goals for 2030 with sustainable development in mind, listing the defeat of poverty as the first point. Being that in 2021 more than 800 million people were still living in extreme poverty (under \$1.25 a day), it is not hard to imagine that it will not be easy to meet this goal. The war in the Ukraine has inevitably worsened this situation, such as the crisis in grain supply and rising fertilizer prices. As with any other conflict, what emerges is the confrontational nature and inherent viciousness of the current global system, which goes beyond the geopolitical divisions usually used to describe the world.

It goes without saying that we can gladly do without poverty. Usually, there are two kinds of reactions: either keep quiet about it or turn your back on it. The Pope has repeatedly pointed this out: whenever we meet a poor person, we usually give something, we hardly ever look the poor person in the eye or speak to him or her. In rich countries, there are residential areas created where poverty simply has no right of access, and if television shows this, we immediately change the channel. People somehow try to pretend not to notice this situation, to silence it, as though it does not depend on each one of us. Actually, the poor person is the touchstone that at least allows us to become aware that something is still wrong and that we must work to change things, to listen to «humanity calling for peace». If this is in accord with the desire of every man and woman of good will, the theological question is what is the Christian motivation for doing so and, even more, what gift of grace might be needed in this commitment, what path of salvation is opened.

It seems paradoxical, but the poor person is, indeed, a sign of the Gospel - first of all, through Jesus' gaze. Indeed, he knows how to open the eyes to the otherness of the world and see what others do not have the courage to notice: the poor widow in the midst of the hubbub of the temple (cf. Mk 12:41-44), likens God to a woman overjoyed at having found a coin (cf. Lk 15:8-10), points out the generosity of the Samaritan who sees a helpless man and becomes his neighbor (cf. Lk 10:30-35), is bothered by a foreign woman who was given only crumbs (cf. Mk 7:24-30), out of compassion, increases the few loaves of bread and the few fish that the disciples have so that they are able to share (cf. Mt 14:13-21). And he put the poor at the center of his own mission and message: «He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: “Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God” (Lk 6:20); and he made himself one of them: “I was hungry and you gave me food to eat”, and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:35ff.)» (EG 197). This particular focus corresponds to a dynamism present in salvation history: «The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor» (EG 197). Already at this stage, the gaze of one who is a disciple of Jesus is a gaze laden with evangelization, as it asks to look at the world with different eyes, touched and healed by Christian grace. It is about imitating the Nazarene's gaze on the world, and making it present. M. Delbrêl recalled this by taking the basin of the Last Supper as a symbol:

If I had to choose a relic of your Passion
I would take that basin filled with dirty water.
Go around the world with that container
And with each foot gird myself with the towel
And bend myself down low,
Never raising my head above the calf

so as not to identify enemies from friends
and washing the feet of the homeless, the atheist, the drug addict,
the prisoner, the murderer, the one who no longer greets me,
the companion for whom I never pray,
in silence,
until all have understood in mine
your Love.

We can see this, even more, through the poverty of Jesus who «though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich» (2 Cor 8:9). What does St. Paul mean here? In what sense did Jesus become poor and how does he make us rich? We can read his statement on at least three levels. The first is theological. Paul's statement tells us something about God's very life and his will to save the world: his love is so great and all-powerful that it reaches to the very end. God's love is revealed in this movement: the Son of God stripped himself of his divine glory to dwell among men and reveal God's secrets (cf. Eph. 2:6-11; DV 4). It is the revelation of God's condescension that first opens the way of reconciliation: «For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life» (Jn 3:16). Jesus' poverty, in this sense, already enables us to experience the richness of God's grace.

The second reading of the Pauline text is eschatological: that is, Jesus' poverty is a sign that helps us understand the future towards which our history is tending. Although we probably cannot better define the social class of Jesus and his family, he lives without having «a place to lay his head» (Mt 8:20) and such insecurity is also demanded of the lives of Christian missionaries: «Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" [...] Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house» (cf. Lk 10:3-7). This choice is not a purely ascetic attitude of self-mastery, as it is sometimes interpreted; St. Paul's phrase reminds us of this, Jesus' making himself poor, in fact, becomes a sign of what history lacks in order to be a history of God's riches, because it points to what is or should be essential, his peace; it calls one to surrender into the hands of Providence. It is part of the divine teaching to take humanity by the hand and lead us on the path we must take in order to arrive at the fullness of salvation. The radical nature of Jesus' choices and those who want to imitate him overshadows whatever is superfluous in order to give a stable foundation to the human journey on the path of the Gospel.

There is also a third dimension, which on the evangelical level can help us reflect on the theme before us. When Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, of his dominion over history and the world, he does not describe it as a power that is imposed by violence. This is the human way of thinking: by using weapons, or simply by being loud, toward those who are weaker and poorer or humbler, we force them to accept our ideas or wishes. Christ, on the other hand, makes himself poor and his kingdom «has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force» (Mt 11:12); His very death on the cross is the greatest proof of this dynamic: «*Regnavit a ligno Deus*» (cf. Fil 2:6-8). The importance of identifying the poor with the kingdom of God, becomes even clearer if we think about the conversion that this entails: the poor, God offers Himself to us not as one whom we must beg for favors, but as an invitation to our innermost self, that which appears in the faces of those who ask us for help and in which - free from other trappings - the image and likeness of our Creator must shine forth.

In summary, in the footsteps of the Bible, we are faced with two paths (cf. Ps 1; Deut 11:26-28; Mt 7:13-14): the way in which we approach this issue, and even more so those who are touched by it, can help us make an examination of conscience on the style of our Christian presence and ecclesial action. There is, in fact, a poverty that we cultivate in a patronizing way, according to a throw away culture (EG 53) that continually reproduces itself and creates pockets of unresolvable need. On the contrary, there is a culture of solidarity, whereby the riches that the common home offers us are shared to satisfy the hunger and thirst of everyone, children of the same Father. Namely, we are invited to strip away the moralistic emphasis we often give to solidarity and endow it with its potential for spiritual and social renewal, its proper evangelical and liberating nature: “In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world’s goods, but, [...] demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers (LS 158).

Prayer Vigil

«*For your sakes Christ became poor*» (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)

Introduction

Out of love, the Son of God became man, stripped himself and took on the human condition - he became poor to enrich our lives and raise us up to the glory of heaven. Through poverty, God reveals his love for man and through this poverty man, with God's grace, becomes happy forever.

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 us to commit ourselves to helping our neighbor.

Jesus Christ, who made himself poor for us, reminds us that it is in the needy that we find Him. For us believers, meeting a person in need means meeting Jesus himself. Thus, the Christian approach differs from any other type of social and humanitarian aid, which predominantly sees the poor as being unfortunate victims.

In the first *statio*, the guiding passage from the second letter to the Corinthians (8:7-15) invites the community of Corinth and us to generously practice works of charity on behalf of the needy. The reason for such generosity, as the Apostle Paul points out, is Jesus Christ who became poor so that we might become rich through his poverty. This biblical passage is a two-fold challenge for us: do we recognize the great love of God who became poor for us? Are we able to follow him on the path of poverty and help others lovingly?

The second *statio* revolves around the passage from Matthew's Gospel (6:19-34) and compares all-pervasive consumerism with our lifestyle, in which trust in the Lord and His Providence should prevail. We must always ask ourselves what we consider to be the most precious gift in our lives, because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (cf. 6:21).

Note that the texts provided in this handbook are only suggestions. The organizer of the vigil can adapt them to the needs of a specific community (parish, hospital chapel, monastery, etc.). Furthermore, songs can be chosen for each *statio*; to enrich the recurring themes in the chosen biblical texts, another meditation can be prepared, or some testimonies can be chosen, depending on the needs and possibilities of the community. Before the final blessing, another intercessory prayer picking up the various situations of the poor could be added and said by the priest or by the faithful.

The choice of biblical passages can also be modified at the discretion of the organizers. By way of example: Sirach 7:27-30,32-36 (stretch out your hand to the poor); it is also possible to prepare a *statio* inspired by the life of a saint or a person who stands out in the Catholic world for his or her service to the poor and witness of life.

The Blessed Sacrament could be exposed during the vigil.

If it has been decided to hold the Vigil with the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the Priest proceeds as usual. This is followed by a song and a short introduction, which could be as follows:

This is the sixth year that we are celebrating the World Day of the Poor in the universal Church. It is a time of recollection, thanksgiving, and reflection, in order to renew with greater strength our commitments made in the past months in support of the poor.

The image of Jesus Christ who became poor, in order to enrich our lives through His poverty, poses the question about whether we recognize the presence of God in every person we encounter on our path, especially in the lowliest, the weakest and the most unfortunate. In this perspective, it is not only we who support the poor, but in that encounter, we touch God Himself who enriches our being through His poverty.

With these thoughts, this evening we will be guided by the words of the Apostle Paul in the Second Letter to the Corinthians where he writes: «For your sakes Christ became poor».

A song follows

1. First *statio* – For your sakes Christ became poor

2 Cor 8:7-15

A reading from the Second Letter of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written: “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

It would be good if one of the people present could give a testimony about their service to the poor, emphasizing the spiritual aspect. If such a witness cannot be found among the participants, testimonies found in various books or online could be used.

As an alternative, the following passages could be used for community reflection.

If you are unable to believe that poverty can make you rich, think of your Lord and stop your doubting. Had he not been poor, you would not be rich. Here is something astonishing: poverty has become the source of abundant wealth. What Paul means by “wealth” is the knowledge of piety, purification from sin, justice, sanctification and a thousand other good things that have been given us now and always. All these things we have thanks to poverty”.

(Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Second Letter to the Corinthians*)

...it is also theft not to give part of one's possessions. Perhaps what I am saying seems astonishing to you, but do not be surprised: for from the divine scriptures, I will offer you a testimony, which tells how robbery, fraud, and theft do not consist only in stealing other people's goods, but also in not giving others some of one's goods. Which passage am I talking about? Reprimanding the Jews through the prophet, God says: «The land has yielded its fruits, and you have not offered tithes: the things taken away from the poor are in your houses» (cf. Gen 1:2; Mal 3:10; Is 3:14). As if to say: «Because you did not make the usual offerings, you stole from the poor». He says this to show the rich that the goods they possess belong to the poor, whether they have received them by paternal inheritance or have accumulated them in some other way. And in another passage it says «Do not cheat the poor» (Sir 4:1). He who strips, strips the goods of others: in fact, we speak of 'stripping' when we ourselves seize the goods of another. And from this, therefore, we learn that if we do not give alms, we will be punished like thieves. For the goods are the Lord's, however, we have accumulated them: and if we give them to the needy, we shall receive in great abundance. That is why God has granted you to possess more than others: not to squander it in lust, drunkenness, luxurious garments, and other frivolities, but to share it with the needy. For just as a tax collector, if he spends the money entrusted to him as he pleases and neglects to distribute it to those he has been ordered to, pays the consequences and meets his death, so too the rich man is a kind of tax collector who receives riches to share with the poor and whose duty it is to distribute them to his fellow servants in need. Therefore, if he spends more on himself than is necessary, in the hereafter he will face the gravest penalty. For the goods he possesses do not belong to him, but to his fellow servants.

(St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on poor Lazarus*)

After a moment of silence for personal reflection, a song can be sung.

The following prayer can then be recited:

Mary, Mother of Hope, walk with us!
Teach us to proclaim the living God;
help us to bear witness to Jesus, the only Savior;
serve our neighbor, welcome those in need,
be workers for justice, passionate builders of a more just world;
intercede for us as we work at this time in history
certain that the Father's plan will be fulfilled.

Dawn of a new world
Be our Mother of Hope and watch over us!
Watch over the Church in Europe: may she be receptive to the Gospel;
an authentic place of communion;
May she live her mission of proclaiming, celebrating and serving
the Gospel of hope for the peace and joy of all.

Queen of Peace, protect humanity in the third millennium!
Watch over all Christians: let them continue confidently on the path towards unity,
Being leaven for the unity of the Continent.
Watch over the youth, the hope of the future,
Let them respond generously to the call of Jesus.
Watch over the leaders of nations:
let them commit themselves to building a common home
in which the dignity and rights of each are respected.

Mary, give us Jesus! Make us follow him and love him!
He is the hope of the Church, of Europe and of humanity.
He lives with us, among us, in his Church.

With You we say "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20):
may the hope of glory infused by Him into our hearts
bear fruits of justice and peace!

(St. John Paul II)

2. Second *statio* - Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also

Mt 6:19-34

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Once the Bible reading is over, another testimony could be given. This time it could be someone who has encountered God in their difficulties. If such a witness cannot be found among the participants, testimonies found in various books or online could be used.

As an alternative, the following passages could be used for community reflection.

Do you want to honor the body of Christ? Then, do not let it to be an object of contempt in its members, that is, in the poor, who have no clothes to cover themselves. Do not honor him here in church with silk cloths, while outside you neglect him when he suffers from cold and nakedness. He who said: «This is my body», also confirmed the fact and said: for I was hungry and you gave me no food (cf. Mt 25:42), and: just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me (cf. Mt 25:45). The body of Christ that is on the altar does not need cloaks, but pure souls; while that which is outside needs much care.

Let us therefore learn to think about and honor Christ as he wills. For the most pleasing honor we can render to him whom we wish to worship is that which he himself wills, not that which we devise. Peter also believed he was honoring him by preventing him from washing his feet. This was not honor, but true unkindness. So you also do him that honor which he commanded, let the poor benefit from your riches. God does not need vessels of gold, but souls of gold.

By this I certainly do not intend to forbid you to give gifts to the church. No. But I beg you to give alms, with these and before these. For God accepts gifts for his earthly house, but he is much more pleased with the help given to the poor.

(St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew*)

It is not a question, then, of approaching the poor with a “welfare mentality”, as often happens, but of ensuring that no one lacks what is necessary. It is not activism that saves, but sincere and generous concern that makes us approach a poor person as a brother or sister who lends a hand to help me shake off the lethargy into which I have fallen. Consequently, « no one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas. This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles [...] None of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice» (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 201). There is an urgent need to find new solutions that can go beyond the

approach of those social policies conceived as “a policy for the poor, but never with the poor and never of the poor, much less part of a project that brings people together» (*Fratelli Tutti*, 169).

(Francis, *Message for the Sixth World Day of the Poor*)

After a moment of silence for personal reflection, a song can be sung.

The following prayer can then be recited:

Blessed are we, if, poor in spirit,
we can free ourselves
from the deceptive reliance on economic goods
and place our primary desires
in spiritual and religious benefits;
and love the poor as brothers
and reverence them as living images of Christ.

Blessed are we, if, trained in the gentleness of the strong,
know how to renounce the deadly power
of hatred and vengeance
and the fear that weapons inspire
and rather have the wisdom to prefer
generosity and forgiveness,
freedom and work,
the conquest of goodness and peace.

(St. Paul VI)

The presider of the vigil can give a summary in his own words, emphasizing both the recurring theme and the work that those present do for the poor

A community prayer of intercession could be included here, said by the priest himself or by the faithful, focusing on the various situations in which the poor live.

At the conclusion of the vigil, all those present renew their commitment to serve the needy according to God's will.

The celebrant introduces this with these or similar words:

Dear brothers and sisters, let us now renew our commitment to devote our lives to the service of the needy in the coming year. Let us say together:

Standing, all say the following prayer:

Lord, Love is patient,
give me the patience that knows how to face one day after another.
Lord, Love is benign

help me to always want your good before mine.
Lord, Love is not envious,
teach me to rejoice in every success.
Lord, Love is not boastful,
remind me not to hold against him what I do for him.
Lord, Love is not proud,
grant me the courage to say: "I made a mistake".
Lord, Love is not disrespectful,
let me see Your face in another's face.
Lord, Love does not seek interest,
Breathe into our lives the breath of gratuity.
Lord, Love is not angry,
turn away gestures and words that hurt.
Lord, Love does not take into account the evil received,
reconcile us in the forgiveness that forgets wrongs.
Lord, Love does not enjoy injustice,
open our hearts to the needs of those around us.
Lord, Love rejoices in truth,
guide our steps towards You who are the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Lord, Love covers all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Help us to cover with Love the days that we will live together.
Help us to believe that Love moves mountains.
Help us to hope in Love beyond all hope.

If the Vigil was held in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the Priest ends it as usual, otherwise he blesses all those present. At the end he may add:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All respond:

Thanks be to God.

Rosary of the Poor

Jesus Christ became poor for your sake

How is the Holy Rosary recited?

P. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

T. Amen

P. O God come to my assistance.

T. Lord, make haste to help me.

P. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

T. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

For each decade, the "mystery" is stated, for example, in the first mystery we contemplate: "the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary".

After a brief pause for reflection, recite: **an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.**

At the beginning of each decade of the Rosary an invocation and a prayer can be added; in this Rosary these are taken from the Novena to Our Lady of the Poor by Banneux.

At the end of the Rosary the Litanies or other Marian prayers are recited.

Introduction

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n. 7)

Where the poor are concerned, it is not talk that matters; what matters is rolling up our sleeves and putting our faith into practice through a direct involvement, one that cannot be delegated. At times, however, a kind of laxity can creep in and lead to inconsistent behavior, including indifference about the poor.

C. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

T. Amen

P. O God come to my assistance.

T. O Lord make haste to help me.

P. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

T. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

First Mystery

You, Lord, are my only good

«For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked» (Rev 3:17).

Let us listen to the Word of God from the Book of Proverbs (30:7)

Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die:

keep falsehood and lies far away from me,
give me neither poverty nor wealth;
but let me have give me the necessary food,
so that, when I am full, I may not deny thee
and say, "Who is the Lord?",
or, reduced to destitution, I will not steal
and profane the name of my God.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n. 7)

We know that the issue is not money itself, for money is part of our daily life as individuals and our relationships in society. Rather, what we need to consider is the value that we put on money: it cannot become our absolute and chief purpose in life. Attachment to money prevents us from seeing everyday life with realism; it clouds our gaze and blinds us to the needs of others. Nothing worse could happen to a Christian and to a community than to be dazzled by the idol of wealth, which ends up chaining us to an ephemeral and bankrupt vision of life.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be

O Mary, Mother of the Poor

Pray for us

P. Let us pray. Virgin of the Poor, lead us to Jesus, the only source of grace, and teach us to be docile to the Holy Spirit, so that the fire of love He brought to announce the coming of his Kingdom may burst forth.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen

or: Virgin Mary, light of those who walk in darkness, assist those who are exploited and humiliated in their dignity, that they may live with the certainty that God is not indifferent to the plight of his children.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen

Second Mystery

I seek you Lord, my hope

«Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be on the day of the Lord’s wrath» (Zeph 2:3).

Let us listen to the Word of God from the Book of Sirach (4:1-4,8)

My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy. Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n. 9)

If we want life to triumph over death, and dignity to be redeemed from injustice, we need to follow Christ's path of poverty, sharing our lives out of love, breaking the bread of our daily existence with our brothers and sisters, beginning with the least of them, those who lack the very essentials of life. This is the way to create equality, to free the poor from their misery and the rich from their vanity, and both from despair.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be

O Mary, Mother of the Poor

Pray for us

P. Let us pray. Virgin of the Poor, who said: 'Believe in me, I will believe in you', we thank you for placing your trust in us. Guide us in making choices that are in conformity with the Gospel, help us to manage our freedom in mutual service and in the love of Christ for the glory of the Father.

T. Amen.

or: Virgin Mary, support of all those who hope in you, keep in your heart all those who are forced to leave their homeland, that they may be received by their brothers and sisters in a spirit of solidarity. Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen.

Third Mystery

Raise me up Lord, do not abandon me

«He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people» (Psalm 113:7-8).

Let us listen to the Word of God from the Prophet Isaiah (14:30,32)

The firstborn of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety. The Lord has founded Zion, and the needy among his people will find refuge in her.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n. 8)

In their desire to find something that can bring them satisfaction, they need someone to guide them towards the insignificant, the vulnerable and the poor, so that they can finally see what they themselves lack. Encountering the poor enables us to put an end to many of our anxieties and empty fears, and to arrive at what truly matters in life, the treasure that no one can steal from us: true and gratuitous love.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be

O Mary, Mother of the Poor

Pray for us

P. Let us pray. Virgin of the Poor, save all nations: help us to be led by wise rulers and grant us the grace that all peoples, reconciled among themselves and in accord, may form one fold under one shepherd.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen.

or: Virgin Mary, comforter of the sick and the disheartened, take care of all those who today live in insecurity and are marginalized, so that, always trusting in the Lord's faithfulness, they may reopen their hearts to hope.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen.

Fourth Mystery

Make me, Lord, a witness to the joy of the Gospel

«The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners» (Is 61:1).

Let us listen to the Word of God from the Gospel according to Luke (6:20-23)

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n. 8)

The sense of weakness and limitation that we have experienced in these recent years, and now the tragedy of the war with its global repercussions, must teach us one crucial thing: we are not in this world merely to survive, but to live a dignified and happy life. The message of Jesus shows us the way and makes us realize that there is a poverty that humiliates and kills, and another poverty, Christ's own poverty, that sets us free and brings us peace.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be

O Mary, Mother of the Poor

Pray for us

P. Let us pray. Virgin of the Poor, comfort the sick with your presence; teach us to carry our cross with Jesus every day and make us deeply committed to the service of the poor and suffering.

T. Amen.

or Virgin Mary, with your heart open and ready to welcome the hungry and those who hunger and thirst for justice, we present to you our exploited and humiliated brothers and sisters: make us attentive to their needs and willing to walk with them.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen.

Fifth Mystery

Lord, grant that I may live in communion with You and my brethren

«Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need» (Acts 4:32-35).

Let us listen to the Word of God from the Gospel according to Matthew (25:34-36)

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the VI World Day of the Poor (n.9)

Because Christ became poor for our sakes, our own lives are illumined and transformed, and take on a worth that the world does not appreciate and cannot bestow. Jesus' treasure is his love, which excludes no one and seeks out everyone, especially the marginalized and those deprived of the necessities of life.

P. Let us pray. Virgin of the Poor, we believe in you and, trusting in your motherly intercession, we abandon ourselves to your protection. We entrust to you the path the Church is taking in this third millennium, the moral and spiritual growth of young people, religious, priestly and missionary vocations and the work of the new evangelization.

T. Amen.

or: Virgin Mary, welcoming womb of those who live in loneliness and abandonment, do not allow any of your children to suffer from a lack of warmth and friendship, rather may they find brothers and sisters who are willing to welcome them and offer them a friendly word.

Through Christ our Lord.

T. Amen.

Salve Regina

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope!

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

To thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn, then, O most gracious Advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this, our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Litany (Mt. 5:1-12)

Mary, mother of the poor in spirit,

Mary, Mother of those who mourn

Mary, Mother of the meek

Mary, Mother of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Mary Mother of the merciful

Mary, Mother of the pure in heart

Mary, Mother of the peacemakers

Mary, Mother of the persecuted

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

graciously hear us

Let us pray

Lord Jesus, our brother, we pray for the poor,
for the sick, for the elderly, for the excluded.

For those who are hungry and have no bread,

but also for those who have bread and are not hungry.

For those who are surpassed by all,

for the exploited, alcoholics, prostitutes.

For the lonely, the weary.

Deliver believers, O Lord,

from thinking that a gesture of charity is enough to heal so much suffering.

The poor we will always have with us:

They are the sign of our poverty as wayfarers,

symbol of our disillusionments, a fragment of our despair.

We will always have them with us, indeed, within us.

Grant, O Lord, to your people in search

the honor of seeing those who have stopped along the way

and to be ready to give them a hand to set them on their way again

in the certainty that those who hope in you will not be disappointed.

Father Tonino Bello, *Words of Love*

Or:

P. O God, our merciful Father,

today many of our brothers and sisters are abandoned by their families and by society.

It is not for lack of bread, but for lack of love that they are abandoned and exposed to danger and death.

T. Father, forgive us!

P. We beseech Thee that we may become capable of sincerely loving the poor who do not even have the strength to beg for food, that we may be merciful, just as You, Lord, are rich in mercy.

Make us capable of loving those who are abandoned and crucified, the countless Christs of this world, so that we may learn to love not with words, but with deeds and in truth.

T. Father, convert us!

P. Let us stretch out our hands towards You and towards our poor brothers and sisters.

As we share our bread with the hungry, bring relief to the afflicted and the sick, welcome the homeless into our homes, clothe the naked, let us be close to the poor, touch and heal their wounds, the very wounded flesh of Jesus the Redeemer.

Only in this way will our wounds, those of families and society be healed.

T. Father, hear us!

P. We are suffering great trials and sorrows because of the pandemic.

Let us repent of our past lives, recognizing that we all make up the one humanity, that we do not save ourselves, that no one saves himself, but rather it is only by loving You and the poor that it is possible to build your kingdom on this earth.

T. Father, save us!

P. We long to live in the love of Your Son Jesus, who shed every last drop of His precious blood on the cross to deliver us from suffering and eternal death, to transform this world of ours into a

welcoming home where no one is forsaken, a world where everyone can love You and their neighbor as themselves.

T. *Father, love us! Amen.*

Litany to Mary Mother of the Poor

Lord, have mercy,
Christ, mercy,
Lord, have mercy,

**Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

**Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.**

God the Father, our creator,
God the Son, our redeemer,
God the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier,
Holy Trinity, one God,

**have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.
have mercy on us.**

Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,

**guide our path.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Daughter of God's people,
Virgin of Nazareth,
Elect among women,

**guide our path.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Virgin humble of heart,
Bride of Joseph the worker,
Queen of the family,

**guide our path.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Woman of our people,
Hope of the oppressed,
Treasure of the poorest,

**guide our path.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Virgin, Mother of Christ,
Virgin, Mother of the Church,
Virgin, Mother of men and women ,

**guide our way.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Mother who knows us,
Mother who hears us,
Mother who understands us,

**guide our path.
illuminate our path.
give us your Son.**

Virgin daughter of man,
Daughter of a pilgrim people,
Living presence in history,

**guide our way.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Mother who knows sorrow,
Mother at the foot of the cross,
Mother for those who suffer,

**guide our path.
light our way.
give us your Son.**

Woman of joy,

guide our path.

Virgin of light,
Queen of peace,

**light our way.
give us your Son.**

Prayer inspired by Pope Francis' Message for the Sixth World Day of the Poor

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God incarnate, we adore You and bless You because, rich as You were, You became poor for us, that we might become rich through Your poverty. Your wealth is Your love that is open to and reaches out to all.

It was out of love that You stripped Yourself and took on our human condition. It was out of love that You became an obedient servant, even to the point of dying on the cross. It was out of love that You made Yourself the bread of life, so that no one lacks the necessities of life and can find the food that nourishes for eternal life.

Let us follow the example of Your poverty - which frees us and makes us peaceful -, sharing our lives out of love, breaking the bread of our lives with our brothers and sisters, starting with the least, so that equality may be achieved and the poor may be freed from misery.

Teach us to approach the poor person as a brother or sister who stretches out his or her hand so that we may lighten the load and, freed from so many fears and useless anxieties, arrive at what really matters in life and what no one can steal: true and gratuitous love.

Remind us that true wealth consists in the mutual love that makes us carry each other's burdens so that no one is abandoned or excluded. Free us from the attachment to money that blinds us from seeing the needs of others.

O Saint Charles de Foucauld, who, born rich, renounced everything to follow Jesus and become poor with Him and a brother to all. Pray for us, so that, following Your example, we may never cease to be poor in everything, brothers and sisters of the poor, honoring the image of Jesus in them. Amen. Alleluia!

Pastoral Suggestions

Poverty is often associated with a disgrace, a shameful state to be denied and hidden. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul explains how this is the condition that Jesus Christ himself assumed out of love for us. Not only did he become incarnate, not only did he take upon himself our sins, but he also became poor, so that we might become rich through his poverty.

This paradox «which today, as in the past, is difficult to accept because it clashes with human logic»¹, epitomizes Jesus' unconditional love for all of us. His poverty becomes our wealth. Giving oneself unconditionally to another becomes a source of spiritual wealth.

No great deeds or spectacular actions are necessary, all that is needed are small gestures made with true selflessness, as Moses explained well to the people of Israel when he explained the commandments to them: «Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. [...] No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe» (Deut 30:11, 14). The word and the command that Jesus subsequently comes to teach us, and that he himself follows even unto death, is one: love your neighbor as yourself (Mt 22:39). In love of one's neighbor, the love of God is manifested, and Christ reminds us, in fact, that «By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another» (Jn 13:35). Therefore, a glass of water, a word of comfort, offering a sandwich is enough. However, to imitate Christ, we must first have known him and welcomed him into our life. If I recognize Jesus in the face of the poor, then I can also welcome them and love them as Jesus did.

Moreover, Christ became poor so that through his poverty God's glory could be manifested. How often we see in ourselves how miserable and poor we are in our sins, and each time we fall, our human weakness is revealed. Yet, it is precisely through our poverty that God's power is manifested, as St. Paul reminds us in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: «But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us» (2 Cor 4:7). Our poverty therefore becomes wealth only because it is a manifestation of God's power; it is only through this that each person can aspire to holiness, to the complete imitation of Christ.

On this *Sixth World Day of the Poor*, we can still imitate Christ by loving others, making ourselves poor for them with small gestures of love. That is why we are proposing some pastoral suggestions that can be taken up and reshaped according to the discernment and needs of each community and promoted in the Dioceses and Parishes, wherever the poor and needy are to be found. Let us welcome the wealth that the Lord offers us by making ourselves poor for others!

1. Invite families to pray together on Sunday.
2. Organize guided tours of museums or churches with accompanying catechesis for the poor and/or children from needy families.
3. Organize a Mass for pregnant women.
4. Organize Masses for children with autism, providing for their special needs (soft music or none at all, short homily, children free to move around the church, etc.).

¹ Pope Francis, *Message for the Sixth World Day of the Poor*, n. 8.

5. Organize informational meetings for parents with psychologists on the topic of social adaptive disorders of young people.
6. Invite elderly who are alone to have a meal together.
7. Organize a meal and a time to share with the poor, encouraging dialogue among the guests.
8. At the time of the offerings during Mass involve the children by asking them to take up the collection.
9. Create an annual fund for a recurring charitable initiative of the parish.
10. Organize prayer meetings for prisoners and invite former prisoners to give their testimony.

Testimonies

Love of the poor

Having the opportunity to calmly reflect on my mission experience in Kenya, I realized that it had all started many years earlier with World Mission Day in 2007.

Until that year, I had not been an active member of my parish; I went to Mass every Sunday, but nothing more. It was my first year at university and I was also taking steps into getting involved in the parish, having offered to teach catechism for the children.

So, one Sunday evening, having heard the announcement of a World Mission Day evening in which the young people were going to talk about their experience in Mozambique during the previous summer. I did not know anyone, but I went to hear what they had to say.

In those years, I was struggling to make sense of the profound differences in social classes found in Africa and here in Europe. I felt I had to make myself useful, even if only in a small way, by sharing with my neighbor all the gifts that the Lord had given me.

Slowly I got more involved in being a catechist, and from there many paths opened up, but the idea of Africa was still running around in my head, of that reality, which for me mirrored the poor, towards whom I felt I could do something, if only just a little.

As the years went by (now the summer of 2010), I made friends with some young people who were part of a group called the *Missionary Workshop*, which was not only dedicated to carrying out projects in mission lands, but also to keeping a vibrant link with the entire territory of our parish, so that everyone was actively involved in the “departure” of a few.

Finally in 2013 the project started. I was full of expectations and curiosity, but also a thousand fears. However, I felt it was the right thing to do, despite the pressure I was receiving from my family, who were not at all happy with my decision.

The opposition I had to face more than once was: «But with all the money it costs to fly, couldn't you do some good there? » And this is probably at the heart of leaving: to meet, to greet each other, to live and share time together, to make oneself available to others, whoever they may be.

After the fatigue (but also the fun) of the trip, I can say that we were welcomed as only a mother could do. The joy, love and availability that all the people in the village shared with us was a manifestation of God's unconditional love for me. It is that love that does not think about whether or not it is beneficial for Him to dedicate time to you, a love that does not try to look after its own interests .

Simple, poor people, willing to deprive themselves of their “nothing” for me, for us.

They had been waiting for us for days with dancing, singing and preparing food. Their day was totally dedicated to our arrival. I would never have believed that I deserved all this love.

I do not know what I have been able to do for all the people I met over the years in Kenya, probably very little or much less than I could have and wanted to. But I am sure of how much I received. I saw so many smiles and heard stories that I will always carry with me.

What I try to do every day, as a teacher, in my service in the parish, in my family life, is the fruit of my experience in Kenya: I try to bring “hope”, a smile, a simple gesture of love and acceptance like that I myself received when I arrived in a new land.

I cannot help but wake up every morning in my comfortable bed and be aware of how fortunate and blessed I am and for all of this I give thanks to the Lord while at the same time I try to help anyone who comes my way.

(Serena Rosselli, Catechist in the Parish of St. Hippolytus – Rome)

A Church with a migrant face

On the border between Tijuana and San Diego, which is the largest in the world, migration was, is and will be, at least for the next few years, a great challenge for society, its authorities, associations, the family and the Church.

In the 21st century, despite its great scientific, technical and industrial progress, entire families continue to travel from remote places going through painful ordeals. A massive exodus marked by extreme sacrifices, limitations, abuse and even death. Myriads of people arrive every day in search of work and better living conditions, trying to escape violence, poverty or misery; some arrive alone, others in small groups or in large caravans, with the illusion of crossing into a neighboring country and pursuing the so-called “American dream”, which, in fact, ends up, for many of them, to be a dreadful nightmare.

The massive migratory situation that has arisen in recent years demands a great evangelizing, charitable and spiritual mission. The Archdiocese of Tijuana, which is growing at an accelerated rate, now numbers 3 million. It is an Archdiocese with a migrant face made up of a mosaic of people from different places, cultures, languages and traditions.

Faced with this challenge, we humbly acknowledge that it is a difficulty much greater than ourselves; nevertheless, we strive to contribute, to be a sign, a leaven in the midst of the community. We have the richness of the Gospel, with Christian values and many people of faith who are supportive and committed to the good of society. Furthermore, we can raise awareness and encourage the active participation of society in all the initiatives in support of migrants and invite the authorities to assume their responsibilities.

In Tijuana there are five houses for migrants where much good is being done, but these are not enough to meet the growing demand with all the social problems that follow. Every day we try to reorganize ourselves to give a more effective response inspired not only in a humanitarian sense, but also by Gospel values. We strive to accompany and provide comprehensive assistance to migrants. We look for alternatives such as a new shelter for migrants, some spaces in parishes where they can be welcomed, programs to collect and distribute supplies to existing care centers, etc.

As people of faith, we do not see our migrant brothers and sisters as a threat, but rather acknowledge their dignity as persons. Moreover, we discover the presence of God in them, we encounter the suffering face of Christ who calls us to actively respond in love. It is a joy to be able to discover the face of Christ in our suffering neighbor each day and thus be able to serve them.

As the Holy Father has repeatedly insisted, our great challenge is to create a culture of encounter that encourages each person and each group to share the treasure of who they are with others. The World Day of the Poor is another occasion that helps us raise awareness and engage in the practice of charity, where we are all brothers and sisters living in a common home.

(Fr. Jonathan A. Valadez Castillo, Archdiocese of Tijuana – Mexico)

The Poor in sickness

It was an unforgettable experience. Honestly, I have never considered the patients of the Healthcare Center located in St. Peter's Square as special patients. In fact, I believe, that all people facing illness are the same. Unfortunately, access to treatment differs, and we should not forget that. Fortunately, we live in a country where the right to health is still guaranteed and we should always strive to protect this right, acknowledging that we can always do better. I was also struck by the faces of the patients, who maintained great dignity even in the midst of difficulty. What struck me most was their feeling that they were being cared for and looked after, but above all they were not left alone, not abandoned. In that clinic, I understood the meaning of the biblical word “the least”.

There was an atmosphere of great cooperation. I felt, and I think it was a common feeling among all of us, that we were doing something really important for the patients. There were doctors who came from all over Italy to offer this service. In addition, it was a beautiful time of sharing with the medical students and the “senior” doctors. Seeing the same hope and enthusiasm in their eyes was a great motivation for me. Certainly, the profession of a doctor is not an easy one, because in addition to trying to cure the disease, one has to try to care for the patient, the person. I believe that patients have given me the greatest gift: the knowledge that one must leave fears behind and always commit oneself with love to what one does. I will always carry this experience in my heart. I will remember the looks in the eyes of the patients, the glimpses of life told between one vaccine and another, the laughter between one joke and another told to ease the tension of the visit, and the grateful smiles of all of us.

(Michela Di Lorenzo, volunteer at the Healthcare Center in St. Peter's Square, 2020)

The logo of the World Day of the Poor



Jesus Christ became
poor for your sake
2022

The logo of the *World Day of the Poor* expresses mutuality. There is an open door with two people on the threshold. Both are holding out a hand; one who is asking for help, the other who is offering help. Actually, it is difficult to tell which of the two is really the poor one. Or better yet, both are poor. The one stretching out a hand to enter is asking for help; the one stretching out a hand to help is invited to go out to share. The two outstretched hands that meet are each offering something. Two arms that express solidarity and urge us not to stay on the threshold, but to go and meet the other. The poor can come into the home, once it is understood that the help is the sharing.

The text of the Apostle to which this Sixth World Day of the Poor refers presents the great paradox of the life of faith: the poverty of Christ makes us rich. If St. Paul was able to teach this - and the Church spread it and has borne witness to it throughout the centuries - it is because God, in His Son Jesus, chose and walked this path. If He became poor for us, then our very life is enlightened and transformed, and acquires a value that the world does not know and cannot give. The wealth of Jesus is his love, which is closed to no one and reaches out to all, especially those who are marginalized and deprived of the necessities of life.

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The Logo of the World Day of the Poor



*If we want life to triumph over death
and dignity to be redeemed from injustice,
we need to follow Christ's path of poverty,
sharing our lives out of love,
breaking the bread of our daily existence
with our brothers and sisters, beginning with the least
of them,
those who lack the very essentials of life.
This is the way to create equality.*

Francisco