

Presentation

The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever (Ps 9:18).

“***The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever***”. This message from the words of Psalm 9 is the central theme of this *Third World Day of the Poor*. It is a gaze full of hope, addressed to those who know how to grasp the certainty that the Lord will intervene in the most diverse situations of life.

In his Message for this *Day*, Pope Francis offers through the words of the Psalmist, that speak remarkably well of the reality with our times, despite the distance in time, a touching definition of the poor: those who “put their trust in the Lord” (n. 3). They are those who “trust in the Lord” because they know him, which is to say, they have a “personal relationship of affection and love” with God. The poor cannot remain forsaken in their hope and God intervenes in their favour to give them back the dignity lost and free them from the slavery of the insecurity of marginalization.

Hence, the reflection on the concrete commitment that we are all called to undertake “in the events of everyday life”. A commitment that “goes beyond initiatives of assistance. Praiseworthy and necessary as the latter may be, they should have the goal of encouraging in everyone a greater concern for individuals in any kind of distress” (n. 7). Pope Francis returns to a theme that is particularly dear to him: “Before all else, the poor need God and his love, made visible by “the saints next door”, people who by the simplicity of their lives express clearly the power of Christian love. God uses any number of ways and countless means to reach people’s hearts. Certainly, the poor come to us also because we give them food, but what they really need is more than our offer of a warm meal or a sandwich. The poor need our hands, to be lifted up; our hearts, to feel anew the warmth of affection; our presence, to overcome loneliness. In a word, they need love” (n. 8). It is a challenge, therefore, to know how to look at the essence and to live the words of Jesus “*as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me*” (Mt 25:40).

This *pastoral resource* is offered as a simple aid to dioceses, parishes and to all the various ecclesial organizations to prepare for and to celebrate the *Third World Day of the Poor*. It should help us reflect on how to restore hope in those whom the world would like to relegate to a life of loneliness and discrimination. Once again, the *World Day of the Poor* gives us an opportunity to ensure that no one will be left without our help and closeness. The Church cannot close its eyes on the needy, let alone those who are voiceless. We are therefore urged to abandon our selfishness, which closes us in on ourselves and on our own needs, to change our mentality with the hope of becoming God's instruments for the liberation and advancement of the poor.

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
THIRD WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

34th Sunday in Ordinary Time

17 November 2019

The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever

1. “The hope of the poor will not perish for ever” (*Ps* 9:18). These words of the Psalm remain timely. They express a profound truth that faith impresses above all on the hearts of the poor, restoring lost hope in the face of injustice, sufferings and the uncertainties of life.

The Psalmist describes the condition of the poor and the arrogance of those who oppress them (cf. 10, 1-10). He invokes God’s judgment to restore justice and overcome evil (cf. 10, 14-15). In his words, we hear an echo of age-old questions. How can God tolerate this disparity? How can he let the poor be humiliated without coming to their aid? Why does he allow oppressors to prosper instead of condemning their conduct, especially in the light of the sufferings of the poor?

The Psalm was composed at a time of great economic development that, as often happens, also led to serious social imbalances. The inequitable distribution of wealth created a significant number of poor people, whose condition appeared all the more dramatic in comparison with the wealth attained by a privileged few. The Psalmist, observing the situation, paints a picture as realistic as it is true.

It was a time when arrogant and ungodly people hounded the poor, seeking to take possession even of what little they had, and to reduce them to bondage. The situation is not much different today. The economic crisis has not prevented large groups of people from accumulating fortunes that often appear all the more incongruous when, in the streets of our cities, we daily encounter great numbers of the poor who lack the bare necessities of life and are at times harassed and exploited. The words of Book of Revelation come to mind: “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). The centuries pass, but the condition of rich and poor remains constant, as if history has taught us nothing. The words of the Psalm, then, are not about the past, but about our present, as it stands before God’s judgement.

2. Today too, we must acknowledge many new forms of bondage that enslave millions of men, women, young people and children.

Daily we encounter *families* forced to leave their homeland to seek a living elsewhere; *orphans* who have lost their parents or were violently torn from them by brutal means of exploitation; *young people* seeking professional fulfilment but prevented from employment by short-sighted economic policies; *victims* of different kinds of violence, ranging from prostitution to the narcotics trade, and profoundly demeaned. How can we overlook, too, the millions of *immigrants* who fall victim to any number of concealed interests, often exploited for political advantage, and are refused solidarity and equality? And all the *homeless* and ostracized persons who roam the streets of our cities?

How many times do we see poor people rummaging through *garbage bins* to retrieve what others have discarded as superfluous, in the hope of finding something to live on or to wear! They themselves become part of a human garbage bin; they are treated as refuse, without the slightest sense of guilt on the part of those who are complicit in this scandal. Frequently judged parasites on society, the poor are not even forgiven their poverty. Judgment is always around the corner. They are not allowed to be timid or discouraged; they are seen as a threat or simply useless, simply because they are poor.

To make matters worse, they can see no end to the tunnel of extreme poverty. We have come to the point of devising a hostile architecture aimed at ridding the streets of their presence, the last places left to them. They roam from one end of the city to the other in the hope of getting a job, a home, a sign of affection... The least offer becomes a ray of light; yet even where justice might be expected to prevail, they meet with violence and

abuse. Forced to work endless hours under a burning sun to gather seasonal fruits, they receive ridiculously low pay. They labour in unsafe and inhuman conditions that prevent them from feeling on a par with others. They lack unemployment compensation, benefits, or even provision for sickness.

The Psalmist describes with brutal realism the attitude of the rich who rob the poor: “They lie in wait that they may seize the poor... and drag them off in their net” (cf. *Ps* 10:9). As in a hunt, the poor are trapped, captured and enslaved. As a result, many of them become disheartened, hardened and anxious only to drop out of sight. In a word, we see before us a multitude of poor people often maligned and barely tolerated. They become for all effects invisible and their voice is no longer heard or heeded in society. Men and women who are increasingly strangers amid our houses and outcasts in our neighbourhoods.

3. The setting of the Psalm is tinged with sadness at the injustice, the suffering and the disappointment endured by the poor. At the same time, it offers a touching definition of the poor: they are those who “put their trust in the Lord” (cf. v. 10), in the certainty that they will never be forsaken. In the Scriptures, the poor are those who trust! The Psalmist also gives the reason for this trust: they “know” the Lord (cf. *ibid.*). In the language of the Bible, such “knowledge” involves a personal relationship of affection and love.

Impressive and completely unexpected as this description is, it simply expresses the grandeur of God, as shown in the way he relates to the poor. His creative power surpasses all human expectations and is shown in his being “mindful” of each individual (cf. v. 13). It is precisely this confidence in the Lord, this certainty of not being forsaken, that inculcates hope. The poor know that God cannot abandon them; hence, they live always in the presence of the God who is mindful of them. God’s help extends beyond their present state of suffering in order to point out a path of liberation that profoundly strengthens and transforms the heart.

4. Scripture constantly speaks of God acting on behalf of the poor. He is the one who “hears” their cry” and “comes to their aid”; he “protects” and “defends” them; he “rescues” and “saves” them... Indeed, the poor will never find God indifferent or silent in the face of their plea. God is the one who renders justice and does not forget (cf. *Ps* 40:18; 70:6); he is their refuge and he never fails to come to their assistance (cf. *Ps* 10:14).

We can build any number of walls and close our doors in the vain effort to feel secure in our wealth, at the expense of those left outside. It will not be that way forever. The “day of the Lord”, as described by the prophets (cf. *Am* 5:18; *Is* 2-5; *Jl* 1-3), will destroy the barriers created between nations and replace the arrogance of the few with the solidarity of many. The marginalization painfully experienced by millions of persons cannot go on for long. Their cry is growing louder and embraces the entire earth. In the words of Father Primo Mazzolari: “the poor are a constant protest against our injustices; the poor are a powder keg. If it is set on fire, the world will explode”.

5. We can never elude the urgent appeal that Scripture makes on behalf of the poor. Wherever we look, the word of God points to the poor, those who lack the necessities of life because they depend on others. They are the oppressed, the lowly and the downcast. Yet, faced with countless throngs of the poor, Jesus was not afraid to identify with each of them: “Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did to me” (*Mt* 25:40). If we refuse to make this identification, we falsify the Gospel and water down God’s revelation. The God that Jesus came to reveal is a Father who is generous, merciful, unfailing in his goodness and grace. He gives hope especially to those who are disillusioned and lacking in hope for the future.

How can we fail to note that the Beatitudes with which Jesus began his preaching of the kingdom of God open with the words: “Blessed are you who are poor” (*Lk* 6:20)? The meaning of this paradoxical message is that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor because they are in a position to receive it. How many poor people do we encounter each day! It seems that the passage of time and the advances of civilization increase their numbers rather than diminishing them. Centuries go by and the Beatitude appears even more paradoxical: the poor are always poorer, and today they are poorer than ever. Yet Jesus who inaugurated his kingdom by placing the poor at the centre, wanted to tell us precisely this: he *inaugurated* the kingdom, but he has entrusted to us, his disciples, the task of carrying it forward with responsibility for giving hope to the poor. Especially at times like our own, there is a need to revive hope and to restore confidence. This responsibility is not something that

the Christian community may underestimate. The credibility of our proclamation and the witness of Christians depends on it.

6. In closeness to the poor, the Church comes to realize that she is one people, spread throughout many nations and called to ensure that no one feels a stranger or outcast, for she includes everyone in a shared journey of salvation. The situation of the poor obliges us not to keep our distance from the body of the Lord, who suffers in them. Instead, we are called to touch his flesh and to be personally committed in offering a service that is an authentic form of evangelization. Commitment to the promotion of the poor, including their social promotion, is not foreign to the proclamation of the Gospel. On the contrary, it manifests the realism of Christian faith and its historical validity. The love that gives life to faith in Jesus makes it impossible for his disciples to remain enclosed in a stifling individualism or withdrawn into small circles of spiritual intimacy, with no influence on social life (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183).

Recently, we were saddened by the death of a great apostle of the poor, Jean Vanier, whose dedication opened up new ways of showing solidarity with the marginalized and working for their advancement. God gave Jean Vanier the gift of devoting his entire life to our brothers and sisters with grave disabilities, people whom society often tends to exclude. He was one of those saints “next door”; thanks to his enthusiasm, he gathered around himself great numbers of young people, men and women, who worked daily to give love and restore a smile to many vulnerable persons, offering them a true “ark” of salvation from marginalization and solitude. His witness changed the life of countless persons and helped the world to look differently at those less fortunate than ourselves. The cry of the poor was heard and produced an unwavering hope, creating visible and tangible signs of a concrete love that even today we can touch with our hands.

7. “The option for those who are least, those whom society discards” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 195) is a priority that Christ’s followers are called to pursue, so as not to impugn the Church’s credibility but to give real hope to many of our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Christian charity finds concrete expression in them, for by their compassion and their willingness to share the love of Christ with those in need, they are themselves strengthened and confirm the preaching of the Gospel.

The involvement of Christians in this *World Day of the Poor* and especially in the events of everyday life, goes beyond initiatives of assistance. Praiseworthy and necessary as the latter may be, they should have the goal of encouraging in everyone a greater concern for individuals in any kind of distress. “Loving attentiveness is the beginning of true concern” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 199) for the poor and the promotion of their genuine welfare. It is not easy to be witnesses of Christian hope in the context of a consumerist culture, a culture of waste concerned only for the spread of a shallow and ephemeral wellbeing. A change of mentality is needed, in order to rediscover what is essential and to give substance and verve to the preaching of the kingdom of God.

Hope is also communicated by the sense of fulfilment born of accompanying the poor not for a brief moment of enthusiasm, but through a constant commitment over time. The poor acquire genuine hope, not from seeing us gratified by giving them a few moments of our time, but from recognizing in our sacrifice an act of gratuitous love that seeks no reward.

8. I ask the many volunteers, who merit recognition for being the first to see the importance of such concern for the poor, to persevere in their dedicated service. Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to seek, in every poor person whom you encounter, his or her true needs, not to stop at their most obvious material needs, but to discover their inner goodness, paying heed to their background and their way of expressing themselves, and in this way to initiate a true fraternal dialogue. Let us set aside the divisions born of ideological and political positions, and instead fix our gaze on what is essential, on what does not call for a flood of words, but a gaze of love and an outstretched hand. Never forget that “the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 200).

Before all else, the poor need God and his love, made visible by “the saints next door”, people who by the simplicity of their lives express clearly the power of Christian love. God uses any number of ways and countless means to reach people’s hearts. Certainly, the poor come to us also because we give them food, but

what they really need is more than our offer of a warm meal or a sandwich. The poor need our hands, to be lifted up; our hearts, to feel anew the warmth of affection; our presence, to overcome loneliness. In a word, they need love.

9. At times, very little is needed to restore hope. It is enough to stop for a moment, smile and listen. For once, let us set statistics aside: the poor are not statistics to cite when boasting of our works and projects. The poor are persons to be encountered; they are lonely, young and old, to be invited to our homes to share a meal; men women and children who look for a friendly word. The poor save us because they enable us to encounter the face of Jesus Christ.

In the eyes of the world, it seems illogical to think that poverty and need can possess saving power. Yet that is the teaching of the Apostle, who tells us: “Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (*1 Cor* 1:26-29). Looking at things from a human standpoint, we fail to see this saving power, but with the eyes of faith, we see it at work and experience it personally. In the heart of the pilgrim People of God there beats that saving power which excludes no one and involves everyone in a real journey pilgrimage of conversion, to recognize the poor and to love them.

10. The Lord does not abandon those who seek him and call upon his name: “He does not forget the cry of the poor” (*Ps* 9:12), for his ears are attentive to their voice. The hope of the poor defies deadly situations, for the poor know that they are especially loved by God, and this is stronger than any suffering or exclusion. Poverty does not deprive them of their God-given dignity; they live in the certainty that it will be fully restored to them by God himself, who is not indifferent to the lot of his lowliest sons and daughters. On the contrary, he sees their struggles and sorrows, he takes them by the hand, and he gives them strength and courage (cf. *Ps* 10:14). The hope of the poor is confirmed in the certainty that their voice is heard by the Lord, that in him they will find true justice, that their hearts will be strengthened and continue to love (cf. *Ps* 10:17).

If the disciples of the Lord Jesus wish to be genuine evangelizers, they must sow tangible seeds of hope. I ask all Christian communities, and all those who feel impelled to offer hope and consolation to the poor, to help ensure that this *World Day of the Poor* will encourage more and more people to cooperate effectively so that no one will feel deprived of closeness and solidarity. May you always treasure the words of the prophet who proclaims a different future: “For you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings” (*Mal* 3:20 [4:2]).

From the Vatican, 13 June 2019

Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua

Francis

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR
HOLY MASS
HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
Vatican Basilica
33th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 18 November 2018

Let us look at three things Jesus does in today's Gospel.

First: while it is still day, he "leaves". He leaves the crowds at the height of his success, acclaimed for his multiplication of the loaves. Though the disciples wanted to bask in the glory, he tells them to go ahead and then dismisses the crowd (cf. Mt 14:22-23). Sought by the people, he goes off by himself; as the excitement was winding down, he goes up the mountain to pray. Then, in the dead of night, he comes down and goes to the disciples, walking on the wind-swept waters. In all of this, Jesus goes against the current: first, he leaves behind success, and then tranquillity. He teaches us the courage to leave: to leave behind the success that swells the heart and the tranquillity that deadens the soul.

To go where? To God by praying, and to those in need by loving. These are the true treasures in life: God and our neighbour. And this is the road Jesus tells us to take: to go up to God and to come down to our brothers and sisters. He tears us away from grazing undisturbed in the comfortable meadows of life, from living a life of ease amid little daily pleasures. His disciples are not meant for the carefree calm of a normal life. Like Jesus, they make their way travelling light, ready to leave momentary glories behind, careful not to cling to fleeting goods. Christians know that their homeland is elsewhere, that they are even now – as Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading – "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (cf. Eph 2:19). They are used to being wayfarers. We do not live to accumulate; our glory lies in leaving behind the things that pass away in order to hold on to those that last. Let us ask God to make us like the Church described in the first reading: always on the move, good at leaving and faithful in serving (cf. Acts 28:11-14). Rouse us, Lord, from our idle calm, from the quiet lull of our safe harbours. Set us free from the moorings of self-absorption that weigh life down; free us from constantly seeking success. Teach us, Lord, to know how to "leave" in order to set out on the road you have shown us: to God and to our neighbour.

The second thing: in the heart of the night, Jesus reassures. He goes to his disciples, in the dark, walking "on the sea" (v. 25). The "sea" in this case was really a lake, but the idea of the "sea", with its murky depths, evokes the forces of evil. Jesus, in effect, goes to meet his disciples by trampling on the malign foes of humanity. And this is the meaning of the sign: rather than a triumphant display of power, it is a revelation of the reassuring certainty that Jesus, and Jesus alone, triumphs over our greatest enemies: the devil, sin, death, fear, worldliness. Today, and to us, he says: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid" (v. 27).

The boat of our life is often storm-tossed and buffeted by winds. Even when the waters are calm, they quickly grow agitated. When we are caught up in those storms, they seem to be our only problem. But the issue is not the momentary storm, but how we are navigating through life. The secret of navigating well is to invite Jesus on board. The rudder of life must be surrendered to him, so that he can steer the route. He alone gives life in death and hope in suffering; he alone heals our heart by his forgiveness and frees us from fear by instilling

confidence. Today, let us invite Jesus into the boat of our life. Like the disciples, we will realize that once he is on board, the winds die down (cf. v. 32) and there can be no shipwreck. With him on board, there will never be a shipwreck! Only with Jesus do we then become capable of offering reassurance. How greatly we need people who can comfort others not with empty words, but with words of life, with deeds of life. In the name of Jesus, we are able to offer true comfort. It is not empty words of encouragement, but the presence of Jesus that grants strength. Reassure us, Lord: comforted by you, we will be able to bring true comfort to others.

The third thing Jesus does: in the midst of the storm, he stretches out his hand (cf. v. 31). He takes hold of Peter who, in his fear and doubt, was sinking, and cried out: “Lord, save me!” (v. 30). We can put ourselves in Peter’s place: we are people of little faith, pleading for salvation. We are wanting in true life and we need the outstretched hand of the Lord to draw us out from evil. This is the beginning of faith: to cast off the pride that makes us feel self-sufficient, and to realize that we are in need of salvation. Faith grows in this climate, to which we adapt ourselves by taking our place beside those who do not set themselves on a pedestal but are needy and cry out for help. This is why it is important for all of us to live our faith in contact with those in need. This is not a sociological option, the fashion of a single pontificate; it is a theological requirement. It entails acknowledging that we are beggars pleading for salvation, brothers and sisters of all, but especially of the poor whom the Lord loves. In this way, we embrace the spirit of the Gospel. “The spirit of poverty and of love – says the Council – is in fact the glory and witness of the Church of Christ” (Gaudium et Spes, 88).

Jesus heard the cry of Peter. Let us ask for the grace to hear the cry of all those tossed by the waves of life. The cry of the poor: it is the stifled cry of the unborn, of starving children, of young people more used to the explosion of bombs than happy shouts of the playground. It is the cry of the elderly, cast off and abandoned to themselves. It is the cry of all those who face the storms of life without the presence of a friend. It is the cry of all those forced to flee their homes and native land for an uncertain future. It is the cry of entire peoples, deprived even of the great natural resources at their disposal. It is the cry of every Lazarus who weeps while the wealthy few feast on what, in justice, belongs to all. Injustice is the perverse root of poverty. The cry of the poor daily grows louder but is heard less and less. Every day that cry gets louder, but every day heard less, drowned out by the din of the rich few, who grow ever fewer and more rich.

In the face of contempt for human dignity, we often remain with arms folded or stretched out as a sign of our frustration before the grim power of evil. Yet we Christians cannot stand with arms folded in indifference, or with arms outstretched in helplessness. No. As believers, we must stretch out our hands, as Jesus does with us. The cry of the poor finds a hearing with God. Yet I ask, does it with us? Do we have eyes to see, ears to hear, hands outstretched to offer help? Or do we keep repeating: “Come back tomorrow” ? “Christ himself appeals to the charity of his disciples in the person of the poor” (Gaudium et Spes, loc. cit.). He asks us to recognize him in all those who are hungry and thirsty, in the stranger and those stripped of dignity, in the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt25:35-36).

The Lord stretches out his hand, freely and not out of duty. And so it must be with us. We are not called to do good only to those who like us. That is normal, but Jesus demands that we do something more (cf. Mt 5:46): to give to those who have nothing to give back, to love gratuitously (cf. Lk 6:32-36). Let us look around in our own day. For all that we do, do

we ever do anything completely for free, something for a person who cannot repay us? That will be our outstretched hand, our true treasure in heaven.

Stretch out your hand to us, Lord, and take hold of us. Help us to love as you love. Teach us to leave behind all that is passing, to be a source of reassurance to those around us, and to give freely to all those in need. Amen.

Suggestion for Lectio

“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever” (Ps 9:18)

The Hebrew Bible divides Psalm 9 - probably originated as a single composition - into two psalms, although from the formal point of view between the first and the second, the so-called “overwriting” does not appear (see Psalm 9:1), or, that introductory verse roughly containing indications on the cycle of belonging or of origin to which the poem was attributed and other suggestions, even of a melodic type, for execution by the assembly. Starting from this split, a double numbering will be followed in the Psalter: that of the Masoretic Text (Psalm 9:1-20 and Psalm 10:1-18) and that of the Greek version of the Septuagint (Psalm 9:1-39), the latter taken from the Vulgate of St. Jerome. In this paper, we will follow the Hebrew numbering, while noting the mutual use of symbols, images, terms and motifs present in the two Psalms, which suggests a single interwoven composition. The stylistic choice of the acrostic form by which the author initiates the various groupings of the verses following the succession of consonants of the Hebrew alphabet testifies to its unity. This system concerning both Psalms, with clear philological difficulties due to the incomplete transmission of the text, not only suggests the unity of the two songs, but also hints at the organic nature of the topics expressed in a single alphabetical procedure which, in the author's intention, had to contain all that could and should be said (from A to Z, from Aleph to Tau) on the theme dealt with in the poem, even if inevitably obvious and with provocative paradoxes. For this reason, the acrostic literary form gave not only a certain unity to the material, but at the same time favoured the mnemonic learning of the text and, above all, served to make the interpretation of the composition easier.

In fact the poem, in its entirety, can be divided into two parts: the first is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving (9:1-20), while the second is a plea made in the classic form of a lamentation (vv. 22-39, or Ps 10:1-18). This diptych says a lot about the *anawim* (literally: “those who are bent over”, to be understood in a dual sense: perhaps socially oppressed, but submissively trusting in God), about God's ways towards them, on the trusting attitude of the believer and, therefore, on the fate of the poor and, ultimately, on their hope (see Ps 9:18).

Paradoxically, according to how it is arranged, it is precisely the second part that allows the underlying theme to be identified, with its developments and implications in terms of existence, topics that refer to each other within a sometimes undecipherable scheme, and in which the two parts of the psalm are interwoven to the point of calling God himself into cause through a question (cf. Ps 10:1ss) very frequently on human lips and in the same biblical pages: how is it possible to speak of divine justice since one does not know its course and does not understand its meaning? It will therefore be the second part of the poem that brings out the question of “theodicy” by recalling various aporias that seem to rage unchecked throughout the world. One of the literary devices lies in the description of the human context, “too human”, of the powerful who - placing confidence only in themselves, in their own strength and in taking care of their wealth - appear, in their unprejudiced autonomy and stifling individualism, heedless of God and the needs of the poor (see in particular Ps 10:1-11). The poor are indicated in the two Psalms with very broad and specialized vocabulary: in addition to the *anawim* (which, as we said, are the submissive, those who are at the mercy of

the powerful and the wicked), in 9:18 there are the ebijônîm (“those who desire”, the needy), then there are the oppressed (dak, who are downtrodden, cf. 9:9; 10:18; a situation also expressed with terms referable to the root hlk, see 10:8,10:14), the innocent (naqî, in 10:8) harassed by the judges themselves and the orphan (jatôm, in 10:14,18) who, together with the widow, indicates the abandoned, the one who has no further point of reference, even in the family or among relatives. Nevertheless, all of them have God on their side and can count on the Lord's commitment to be their protector and liberator, the go'el (see Lv. 25:48: who is a relative who avenges blood or who redeems a family member from slavery). This description already suggests not to group all these people indiscriminately into the impersonal category of “poverty”, but to consider them as persons placed not in a stable or definite state, but in a “pause” within a path of liberation, a “temporary place”.

The poem indicates the weakness of the wicked who, in their superiority, are portrayed as satisfied with themselves and not in need of the help and understanding of others and of God himself. The enemy, the adversary, the violent, the wicked, the arrogant, the presumptuous, and the impostor are evoked, even with the use of warlike images. Underlying these characters portrayed in these ways is the illusion of supremacy and, consequently, the claim to treat others according to their liking, disposing of their lives and property, buying and selling the poor for a pair of sandals, as Amos would say in his prophetic condemnation. Looking at all this from the final perspective one could compare this description to that of a “bully”, one who bullies with conviction and certainty of success, both towards God and towards others. In fact, a bully is a weak person who thinks he is strong and to demonstrate his presumed strength to himself as well as to others, he tries to subdue someone who appears to him to be weaker than himself, or who, in that particular historical moment, is in a subordinate position. Thus, in the second part of Ps 9 (i.e. in Ps 10), the psalmist denounces the perverse actions of the wicked, their deception, their conspiracies, their evil-doing towards the “poor”. There is also the characteristic of godlessness that is added to the bully, whose actions come from a form of arrogance typical of those who do not believe in God or of those who believe they can live as if God did not exist (see Ps 10:4). In this sense the wicked one is none other than the atheist, or one who acts - without sparing oneself in oppression, arrogance, wickedness and lies - only one's temporary interests, occasional advantage, short-sightedness and passing desires, denying God and despising or ignoring the poor.

Apparently this arrogance seems to repay the proud (in Ps 10:5 we read: “his ways prosper at all times”) which is why one wonders if God really has forgotten the righteous. Faced with this, a firm point is set: the righteous are firm in their faith and continue to invoke the Lord (see Psalm 10:12-18). In this regard it has been shown that the poor and the oppressed, who are ultimately the “righteous” according to the Most High, are those who “trust in the Lord”, “recognize his presence” and “look for him”. Thus the Lord listens to the cry of the poor (cf. Ps 9:19-20; Ps 10:12-13) “arise” and re-establishes justice, humbling the powerful and exalting the righteous (see Psalms 10:14-18 see also Lk 1:52). At this point the text ends with a profession of faith in God, who not only does not forget the poor, but offers himself to the poor - with a thoughtful image of protection and care - as their refuge. On the other hand the Lord has always acted this way because this is his “way”. In fact, looking at the history of salvation, the author understands that he can trust God because, as always, he will support his cause.

The process of interpreting the two Psalms done so far - proposing Psalm 10 as the starting point, even before the prayer of praise of Psalm 9 – seems unbalanced. However, this reversal of reading is justified by the fact that the testimony of thanksgiving for the victory of the believer/pleader over his enemies declared in advance is based on the certainty that the psalmist has in God's faithfulness to his covenant and his promises. The author, therefore, first gives thanks and then expresses, through anguishing questions what his concrete existence says to him, his free submission to the mysterious will of God that has been, is and will forever be "faithful". Within these existential crevices, there is no lack of temptation to give up. But the thanksgiving that precedes the supplication or, better said, the praise inserted in the broader and more variegated horizon of the existence of the believer, suggests to man to stand strong, not only when faced with evil and its burning consequences and contradictions, but above all when the believer lives in that craggy circle overflowing with perversion, abuse of power, ruthlessness, atheism, within which the righteous must show - without substituting or escaping - his different and alternative way of living: trusting in God and, therefore, open to hope.

At this point it can be seen that there is also a "contemplative" dynamic within the Psalm when the prayer of the individual becomes an invitation extended to the whole assembly to join in the same hymn of thanksgiving (see Ps. 9:11-12). Truly, even when there is only one person who expresses himself, in the Psalm they are all brought together through the realistic and suggestive use of the human word - the sacrifices, the disappointments, the disasters, the tragedies, the desires, the expectations, the satisfactions, the joys and hopes that become common feelings and shared experiences. This intimate sharing prepares one for contemplation.

Contemplation - which in itself is "vision" or "theory" - can be expressed with a word present in some profane texts from Greek literature. The term - beautiful, suggestive and expressive - is *synèidon*: *syn* means "with", "together" and refers to "company", "communion"; *èon* indicates gaze, *èidon* is vision. In a very generic sense it can be understood as "glimpse", but in reality it refers to the idea of "embracing with a gaze", that is "understanding (*syn*) everything in the same gaze": it is as if I wanted to make others share in what I see, while I myself am part of what others have the joy of seeing through me that I involve them in my own vision (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). With a little stretching, it can be said that contemplation, that which we want to indicate with *synèidon*, means making it possible for others to share, in a single vision, that which attracts us and that which gives meaning to our life: the things contemplated, embraced with a glance, must in turn be passed on to others, communicated to others, to make it possible for them to share - in the strength of a single embrace - the same joy and full, authentic meaning of life that has been discovered. Contemplation is a gaze that expands and a vision that encloses and engages.

Hope stands out within this contemplative process. What does the psalmist want to say when he says that "the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever" (Psalm 9:18)? It means that the person who prays, who trusts in the Lord's fidelity, feels included in the embrace of God's gaze and wants, in turn, to include others in the same vision, with prayer and one's life. Hope thus understood (as well as contemplation) is a *dynamis* (a dynamic principle) that points to the transformation of personal and community history with incisive and effective actions. The provocation of the psalmist is embodied, therefore, in the most hidden recesses of our real life

and - without soaring in the euphoric and random heights of only good intentions – it breaks the chains of unalterable and unchangeable habits, including religious ones.

In this sense, the gratitude of the psalmist is the sharing of hope that is the certainty - based on remembering the history of salvation - that the Lord hears the cry of the poor and supports the cause of the righteous: all the saving interventions that the people of Israel experienced become opportunities to continue to believe and to hope. The threads that weave the mystery of God and man's desire are interwoven around this hope, also in Psalms 9 and 10. For God takes care of the poor, is concerned about their future and takes care of what will happen to them. However, the entire itinerary of the two Psalms is to lead us to an awareness: the verb to hope is not conjugated in the past, but in the future, filled with all the heritage of the work completed by God that is worthy of faith. To hope, therefore, means to know that God takes care of the human person - above all the lowly and the poor - supporting and raising them up. However, this care of others is also entrusted to us (see Mt 25:31-46). Thus, in addition to having us concretely experience human limitations, encounter with the poor enables us to relate to others using the same divine “way”, it enables us to love the Lord “not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (cf. 1 Jn 3:18) taking care of the wounds of man's flesh, it opens us to the logic of the gift and, above all, gives us the opportunity to renew the hope of our salvation. Yes. To put it in the words of Pope Francis (*Message for the Third World Day of the Poor*, 13 June 2019, n. 9): “the poor save us because they enable us to encounter the face of Jesus Christ”.

Comment

The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever (Ps 9:18)

Poverty and destitution, whatever kind it may be (material, social, economic, cultural, spiritual ...), always creates a form of physical and spiritual emptying and existential loss in the person and at the same time it generates in one who believes in a personal and provident God a piercing question and an inner revolt: how can this God whom I already know as a liberator from the condition of evil (see Ex 3:7-10), as a father concerned about my well being (see Is 63:16; 64:7), as a companion capable of accompanying me in my sufferings (see Lk 24:15), allow the poor to suffer? But above all, how can he allow men and women who should be tied to me by bonds of communion and social and religious affiliation, become enemies ready to take advantage of their situation in order to obtain personal gain, forgetting the obligation of brotherhood and friendship?

We have tried to summarize in a few words the theme of Psalm 9 that inspired the verse which is the object of our reflection. But to understand our psalm well we must read it together with Psalm 10, divided from the previous one in the tradition of the Hebrew text, but which should certainly be considered as the second part of a single prayer: a sure sign of this is the fact that it is an alphabetical psalm, where each stanza begins with a different letter of the alphabet; this literary device, which aids memorization, begins in Psalm 9 and ends in Psalm 10.

Psalm 9-10 is therefore divided into 3 parts:

- 9:1-12: a solemn thanksgiving to God who opens himself to praise and in which the Lord, king and judge is celebrated, who makes a judgment on oppressors and saves the poor;
- 9:13-20: a heartfelt plea to God in which the psalmist has already celebrated the judgment on the oppressors and the liberation of the poor;
- 10:1-18: a forceful complaint to God in which the oppression of the poor is described and the realization of their expectations of good is invoked.

If in commenting on verse 18 we see who the poor are for the psalmist, it is likewise important to understand who the “oppressors” are to him. For them the term “gentiles”, “pagans” (present 6 times in the original, in 9:5,15,17,19,20; 10:16) is used several times: but here we must not think of the people as enemies of Israel (indicated in 9:8 and 11 with different terms), but rather those who “forget God” (9:17) and, for this reason, must be compared to pagans, to those who do not know God and who have not experienced his salvation and his covenant. They have “forgotten”, as if they had lost their own humanity (9:19), curse God (10:3), indeed they are convinced that God is not interested in the poor (as though he did not exist ... 10:4,11,13) and because of this they become unfaithful, taking advantage of him through deceit, deception, injustice and violence (10:7-10). It is not the outward belonging to the body of believers that qualifies a person: one who oppresses the poor, even if a believer, has lost his humanity and has become an enemy of God; whatever

his beliefs, he is godless. “Atheist” for the psalmist is one who, losing his humanity in oppressing the poor, rejects God who is “father of the orphans and defender of widows” (Ps 68:5 the fatherless and widows were the of socially and economically poor *par excellence* in ancient Israel). Not recognizing himself as the poor person’s brother, the oppressor cannot even be in relationship with God: he who does not recognize God in the poor cannot know God.

Finally we come to our verse. Our saying is, therefore, like the second hemistich of a Hebrew verse, constructed, following the usual rules of the Jewish/biblical tradition, according to the “parallel” mode between the two parts of the verse: the two sections correspond, enlighten and complement each other. Here is the complete verse:

*For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever.*

Now, let us give this text a more literal translation that will enable us to enter into the depths of the psalmist's thought:

*So it is, the needy shall not always be forgotten
waiting for the good of the poor will not perish for ever.*

The verse is introduced with a small word which, although it may also have causal value (“for”), we prefer to use “so it is”, almost as if the author of the psalm says: “what I am saying is that the foundation of hope is not my opinion, but the certainty of faith that gives rise to my thoughts and my trust in God”.

The “needy”, to be understood here, according to the meaning of the original term, as one who lives in a completely disadvantaged social and economic condition, is constantly under God’s gaze (“will not be forgotten”: according to a normal expedient in Scripture God is really the implied subject in the passive phrase). If the oppressors “forget” their humanity, afflicting the poor, God “does not forget it”. And he will “never” forget it. Referring to the etymology of the term translated as “never” (which derives from the root of “to shine”), we could paraphrase the expression: “for as long as the stars shine in the sky God will not forget those who suffer in poverty”. Those stars that “shine” and “sparkle” in the sky and were the sign of God's promise to Abraham (see Gn 15:5) will now be the sign that God does not forget the poor ... And as Abraham believed “against all hope” (see Gn 15:6; Rm 4:18-21; Heb 11: 8-18) and saw his expectation fulfilled, so too can the poor be certain of God’s benevolence and blessing on his life.

The “miserable” person, to be understood here according to the original meaning of the term is one reduced to a state of affliction, misery, need or poverty of any kind, and carries within a desire for redemption and life that he or she cannot get lost like an animal lost in the desert (this is the etymological meaning of the verb that we have used “to go whipped”). Just as the Lord Jesus goes in search and gathers the lost sheep so that it does not wander aimlessly and at the mercy of danger (see Lk 15:4-7 and Mt 18:12-14), so he will not let the hope of the poor fail or let them roam in despair and frustration as they await the fulfilment of God's

promises. And this will happen “for ever”: this is not a promise destined to the end of time or to special historical situations and events, or even to particular social classes, people or particularly fortunate people, but it is destined for all time, therefore, to every poor person, whatever his or her situation, because the fulfilment of God's promise has no time limits and therefore no limit of place or state.

In conclusion, we can say that the psalm does not give us a manual for the social liberation of the poor, ready to be used, to be put into practice as if it were a protocol to be followed in its various steps: the Word of God, however, the foundation of our faith, nourishes our hope because it tells us that those who oppress the poor lose their humanity and also lose their vital relationship with God; and it tells us how God always acts in favour of the poor and, therefore, consequently helps us to understand how the believer should also act. If God never abandons the poor, then the believer is called to follow his example and conform himself to his God (see for example Lv 11:45 and 19:2; Mt 5:48; Phil 2:5).

1.

“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever” (Ps 9:18)

“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever”

These words of the psalmist sound like a complete and fitting response to the arrogance of rulers or oppressors against the humble, the poor, and the suffering of the innocent. But it is also a cry, which today, once again, resounds in the Church, in every Christian community, which has experienced the “Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14) for us. But how do we hear this cry, respond to it, feel it as part of ourselves? Who of us has not experienced, inside and outside of ourselves, the feeling of being assaulted by sounds, by words that deafen our day and even our night, thinking that the new day could be worse than the previous one? How can we bear the disappointment of life, without seeing it as a door of hope? How many times, perhaps unconsciously, even as a joke, have we heard or said that “hope is the last thing to die”, or “as long as there is life there is hope”. But what does all this mean for us today? *“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him”* (Ps 34:6): this verse that accompanied us last year and that still rings in our ears, not always attuned to the plight of the poor, takes us back to the same world, fraught with further suffering, but with a new vision and certainty: *“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever”*. God does not forget the cry of the poor. For them every human disappointment will be overcome by hope, because *“The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a refuge in moments of anguish (...) he does not forget the cry of the afflicted”* (Ps 9:9,12). The Lord does not tolerate evil, for this he comes to the aid of the poor: *“Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him? (...) what does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?”* (Jas 2:5,14). God has always accompanied and continues to accompany his people: he always accompanied and never abandoned Israel, despite its repeated infidelities; he sent his beloved Son who loved us so much, to the point of giving his life for each of us; as a loving Father continues to follow today's human community “with a motherly heart”, with particular attention to the weak, the poor, anyone who lives a situation of hardship. The admonition of the apostle James, then, today is addressed to us, Christian communities, called more than ever before, to make our faith visible through our work, but above all our being, in the same way in which Christ lived his whole earthly life: no one can feel exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice. We are one brotherhood: the other is the one who makes me exist. I exist on the stimuli that the environment gives me, the other, the “you” that allows me to say “I”. The world, which often seems to walk without the need for God, needs a strong injection of humanity, to make that charity, made of hope, visible. There are many communities of men and women, who in various ways, often risking their lives, in various and diverse parts of the world, continue to offer their social, educational and pastoral service, making themselves *“Authentic witnesses of hope that does not disappoint”* (St. John Paul II

Jan. 16, 1982) and, the same Pope will then repeat this again in Greccio, “*bringing to our history the Good News, which is a proclamation of hope, reconciliation and peace; renewing Christ in the hearts of anguished and oppressed people*”.

Who are the poor today?

The psalm launches us into our times, it becomes a prayer of the contemporary person, often dejected or disappointed in their expectations, in their dignity, touching the deepest part of their being and experiencing poverty concretely. But who are our poor today? The list is long; first of all, there is still the explosion of immigrants, which, starting as an emergency situation, is becoming a global structural phenomenon, involving the whole world. We can put together all the various forms of poverty and suffering that are part of this complex reality: entire families forced to leave a land of misery and exploitation; women raped, minors separated from their mothers and, sometimes orphaned from their parents, shipwrecked at sea, even before arriving at a safe harbour; men far from their homeland, but with so many expectations, often disillusioned by the lack of employment, a small “home” of their own, but also because they are sometimes seen as people who create insecurity and social instability, rather than being seen as a “possible human resource”. All of this constitutes the new forms of poverty which, lacking meaning, lead to marginalization, uneasiness, a tragic sign of a journey without a destination. All people with so much sadness and anguish, little hope and, perhaps, some joy. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult today to draw a reliable picture of their reality, since it is a phenomenon not exclusively linked to economic status, but to human motivations of a familial nature and of broad social unrest. Beside all of this, we cannot forget the large number of people unemployed or laid off in our country; of young people looking for their first job, or sometimes easy prey to drug consumption, a bubonic plague that leaves the signs of many other bruises, to the point of human beings losing their identity. Grandparents become increasingly needed and beneficial to look after their grandchildren, because their children are working, while on the contrary so many elderly people feel abandoned, living a meaningless life without relationships. These are just some of the many faces of poverty, not always easy to identify, but that only evangelical love, and contact with others know how to discern. “*How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?*” (Ps 137:4): prayer expresses nostalgia for the homeland and, as a metaphor, for the times when things were better, and then in our hearts, the feelings of hatred and revenge arise when we see life as a failure. But if the world, often distracted by a flurry of lights and false illusions, forgets those who “on the political chessboard count for little”, God “*has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree*” (Lk 1:52): God will never disappoint the hope of the poor.

How can we become people of hope and take care of the poor?

It is not easy to be witnesses of hope in a highly materialistic society, never satisfied with what one has and always desperately looking for new things, already seen as old, immediately after purchasing or using them. How, then, can we be people of hope and become

a *brother* or *sister* to another who is in need? These two questions shake our Christian life from the ground up: in fact, they imply a new way of seeing, of feeling, of believing, of loving, but above all of acting. The more one enters the Word, the more it becomes a criterion of judgment for one who wants to be faithful to the Gospel. “*He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed*” (Pr 19:17). Approaching the poor means recognizing the presence of God, of Jesus, who never rejects them, but calls them to himself and consoles them. But to overcome the oppressive situation of dependence, misery and poverty, they need the presence of brothers and sisters, who make them feel like friends and family, beyond possible religious, cultural and social differences. Only in this way will they be able to have hope in an “other” future and discover the saving power of their very existence. Only in this way can we become bearers of hope in a world that, despite having a hunger for this hope, is unable to obtain it through their work or buy it with their own money. In this way we will be men and women, communities capable of being close to the tired and discouraged, not so much with words or condemnations of a world that does not go according to our desires, but with a happy spirit, full of confidence and, for this reason full of hope, ready to help them like the good Samaritan, recognizing in them Christ himself.

How can we not let down the hope of the poor?

All those small gestures of good neighbourliness and closeness are still good; while we try to give meaning and be fully aware of our relationships with others: may they feel in our gestures a heart attentive to listening, without judgment, with the warmth of love that can break down the walls of loneliness; may they experience a sharing that blends the clarity of intention and the gratuity of the gesture, without feeling obliged to reciprocate. Some words could accompany us on this day: “**Deepen**”. Let's sit down, “**listen**” to the stories of the “poor people around us”, from their perspective. “**Observe**”, what they want to do, their deepest hopes and desires. Put ourselves next to the so-called “others” who make us so afraid, and discover that they are like us after all. They have the same desires as we have to find someone who loves them, to be able to eat, to start a family, to live an ordinary life, but in an “extraordinary” way. Everyone, in his own small way, can do something so that many “infant Jesus” can come from us and continue to live in this world. Here then is the last word for this day: “**integrate**”. Then the word of the Lord will not only be a nice historical book, but will become more and more the Word, a Word that will become incarnated in our daily life.

Also a practical proposal: in a world of plurality of beliefs, in family, at work, at school, on buses, along roads, wherever, there is an urgent need for inter-religious dialogue, lived in everyday life. Hence, on this *day*, let's find a meeting space on both a personal and community level, without trying to convert the other, but aimed solely at understanding the other, in a sincere search for authentic human coexistence. In this way “we build the house on rock”, placing our hope on forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father, whom Christ has already given us with his death and resurrection. Exercising respect and forgiveness will be the *main way* for us to preserve hope in ourselves and spread it where we live and work. To work in hope: an essential reality like the caress of a mother, given to the child to whom she has given birth. If love becomes true in that maternal caress, in the act of forgiveness, hope becomes real and is communicated.

2.

“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever” (Ps 9:18)

The cry of the poor is an authentic act of faith that reveals the profound meaning of man's search to relate to God to find justice and refuge in Him. In the Psalms we see the desire for this relationship in the praying person of all times. In them the image of the humble is crystallized in the manner of total openness of the heart to the Most High. The injustice of which he feels himself a victim is shouted in His ears. The poor of the Bible are the “*anawim*”, a social category that includes those who are destitute, beggars, helpless, poor, those who are deprived of everything needed to survive. The *anaw* is an expression of an existence located at the edge, relegated to dialectical tension between life and death. Even more striking is the attribute of the needy who is one that opens the door of his suffering heart to make room for the presence of God's Mercy.

Psalm 9 is a hymn of thanksgiving to the Lord who judges in justice and righteousness. It is precisely the oppressed of all times who understand the saving scope of his action in history. The *anawim* of the Psalm are not mere beggars who roam the streets begging for food to live; they are people who in their being recognize themselves as needy and seek in God the conditions needed to satisfy their destitution. People of every age, illuminated by the light of faith, succeed in grasping, in the praise of the Psalm, the paths that lead them back to their own history and the path that leads to the goal of encountering Divine Mercy, the source of unquenchable hope. Psalm 9 has the characteristics that make it classifiable as a typical example of an alphabetic psalm, with the particular style in which in every two verses, the first word starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in a progressive way. It is interesting to see an evocative message in this rhetorical literary device. The human language that is combined with the letters of the alphabet and the psalmist's prayer intertwine to form a single language, that of speaking to one's God in prayer and that of God who speaks to him or her in Scripture. Experiencing the mysterious plan of the Most High, recognizing that it is present in the history of every human being triggers the dynamic of remembering, that is, of returning to feeling in one's heart the signs of His omnipotence. A heart weighed down by riches loses its ability to remember, finds it difficult to rejoice, stops praising, does not feel compassion for those who suffer and for those who cry of an injustice that is too heavy to bear. The pages of Revelation reflect the drama in which one relegated to the imprisonment of wealth is caught. *“For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see”* (Rv 3:17-18). The free heart of the poor knows how to grasp, albeit with difficulty, God's providential invitation: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me”* (Rv 3:20). Psalm 9 expresses the idea of Divine Providence, translating it into a song of praise and thanksgiving. The experience of the praying person is that of one who has reaped the benefits of God's faithfulness. Praise arises from this providential certainty, that is, the story of all the wonderful works He has accomplished. The motivation for praise rises from the heart of the psalmist who sees his enemies recoil: the proud, the rich and oppressors. Running away is a sign of their fall. The powerful think in vain that they can dominate with pride and with their attempts of oppression. But God does justice to the poor by taking their fate to heart. In doing justice he raises his voice and his reproach is enough to weaken the arrogance of the enemies. Even

their memory is destroyed, the cities that once dominated are silenced lying in the shadow of silence. *“The Lord has made himself known, he has executed judgment; the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. The wicked shall depart to Sheol, all the nations that forget God”* (Ps 9:16-17). From heaven’s heights God’s vigilant watch over the world continues, his dominion lasts forever and ever, administering the peoples with justice and righteousness. The Lord really proves to be the only refuge for the oppressed. In the face of human injustice, harassment and abuse, the poor who can do nothing by themselves know that they can count on divine protection. It is the experience of refuge that many Biblical characters have known. It is enough to recall the story of Job shouting out his inexplicable poverty with pain and suffering: *“Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! ... I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would give heed to me....Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me”* (Jb 23:3,5-6,15-16). Job, the poor man who is faithful, even dares to invoke death: *“Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort before I go whence I shall not return, to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness”* (Jb 10:20-22). In fact it is not possible to fully understand God’s design, one is never able to give a sure and complete explanation of the suffering of the poor. However, when the awareness of not having been abandoned arises in one’s heart, when one experiences His saving presence, one encounters the Lord face to face. *“Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.... I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee”* (Jb 42:3,5). Job’s crying, the cry of every poor person, is not the way to protest against His indifference, but it is the last attempt of those who abandon themselves to His protection. In the heart of every believer, despite all the oppression and wickedness of the surrounding world, dwells the desire to believe in the good and merciful God who continues to love us despite His silence which is incomprehensible to us. Even if at times it seems that He does not see and is not interested in the poor, leaving them to the mercy of the wicked, this forgetfulness is only momentary and illusory. *“The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever”* (Ps 9:18). If this is so, if the Lord has shown himself active in the defence of the oppressed, the prayer of justice arises spontaneously, embracing the poor of every time and place: *“Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before thee! Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men!”* (Ps 9:19-20).

PRAYER VIGIL

The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever (Ps 9:18)

Introduction

The text of the Vigil, proposed for the Communities, takes up the theme contained in the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor: “*The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever*”

The simple format focuses on listening to the Word of God, and through comments and testimonies attempts to arouse in the hearts of all the *com-passion* of God, which in man becomes the certainty of hope that his cry will not remain unheard.

During the opening song, the Book of Sacred Scripture is brought in and will be the sign to accompany the Prayer Vigil. As in the celebration of the Eucharist, before approaching the Mystery it is necessary to prepare our hearts by asking to be touched by the source of Mercy that generates forgiveness. A penitential prayer is proposed, followed by invocation of the Holy Spirit which is a prelude to listening to the Word of God.

The choice of songs can be enlarged or modified, at the discretion of those organizing the Vigil, maintaining the main theme of hope that shall not perish forever.

Some quotes from the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor, the invocations and the testimonies help to develop the proposed biblical themes. We also suggest preparing a short meditation, or choosing a testimony, to be proposed to those who will participate in the prayer service.

The songs, the invocations and the testimonies can be modified according to the various situations in which the prayer service takes place.

Opening song

Enthronement of the Book of Scriptures. A covered and well-decorated lectern is prepared in the centre of the presbytery which will hold the book of the Holy Scriptures. During the opening song a priest or deacon will bring the book accompanied by four lighted lamps from the back of the church. Upon reaching the presbytery, he will show the Book of Scriptures to the faithful, put it in the prepared place and incense it.

Arriving at the presider's chair he begins the prayer:

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

The assembly responds: Amen

Priest: Brothers and Sisters, our Holy Father Francis in his Message for the Third World Day of the Poor reminds us that “the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever” (Cf. Ps. 9:18). These words - continues Pope Francis - are of incredible relevance, an admonition and a deep reminder for all believers: it is necessary “to restore lost hope in the face of injustice, suffering and the uncertainties of life”. During this time of prayer we will listen to passages of the Word of God that should shake the numbness of routine and help us to open our

hearts and minds to the newness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the silence of our hearts let us look at our lives and ask the mercy of God our Father.

Brief pause in Silence

Singing of the Kyrie (M. Frisina)

Lord, you are the defender of the poor, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison.

Christ, you are the refuge of the weak, have mercy on us.
Christe, Christe, eleison.

Lord, you are the hope of sinners, have mercy, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Kyrie, eleison.

Priest: Almighty God have mercy on us, may our eyes be open to the new light, help all of us recognize Him in the poor and the excluded, and with the strength of His mercy lead us to eternal life.

The assembly responds: Amen.

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* or other song

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

A reader proclaims the Scripture passage

FROM THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

19:1-2,9-19a

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the assembly of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.

You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.

You shall not defraud your neighbour; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning. You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the Lord.

You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.

You shall keep my statutes.

The Word of the Lord.

The Psalm can be prayed alternating sides

From Psalm 9

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

*When my enemies turned back,
they stumbled and perished before you.
For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.*

He judges the world with righteousness,
he judges the peoples with equity.
The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.

*And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.*

*Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion.
Declare his deeds among the peoples.*

For he,
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.

*The Lord has made himself known, he has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.
For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the poor perish forever.*

Listen to the Magisterium ...

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

The Psalm was composed at a time of great economic development that, as often happens, also led to serious social imbalances. [...] It was a time when arrogant and ungodly people hounded the poor, seeking to take possession even of what little they had, and to reduce them to bondage. The situation is not much different today. The economic crisis has not prevented large groups of people from accumulating fortunes that often appear all the more incongruous when, in the streets of our cities, we daily encounter great numbers of the poor who lack the bare necessities of life and are at times harassed and exploited.

[...] The centuries pass, but the condition of rich and poor remains constant, as if history has taught us nothing. The words of the Psalm, then, are not about the past, but about our present, as it stands before God's judgement.

Today too, we must acknowledge many new forms of bondage that enslave millions of men, women, young people and children.

Daily we encounter *families* forced to leave their homeland to seek a living elsewhere; *orphans* who have lost their parents or were violently torn from them by brutal means of exploitation; *young people* seeking professional fulfilment but prevented from employment by short-sighted economic policies; *victims* of different kinds of violence, ranging from prostitution to the narcotics trade, and profoundly demeaned. How can we overlook, too, the millions of *immigrants* who fall victim to any number of concealed interests, often exploited for political advantage, and are refused solidarity and equality? And all the *homeless* and *ostracized persons* who roam the streets of our cities?

[...] To make matters worse, they can see no end to the tunnel of extreme poverty. We have come to the point of devising a *hostile architecture* aimed at ridding the streets of their presence, the last places left for them. They roam from one end of the city to the other in the hope of getting a job, a home, a sign of affection... The least offer becomes a ray of light; yet even where justice might be expected to prevail, they meet with violence and abuse. Forced to work endless hours under a burning sun to gather seasonal fruits, they receive ridiculously low pay. They work in unsafe and inhuman conditions that prevent them from feeling on a par with others. They lack Unemployment compensation and benefits don't exist for them they can't even afford to get sick.

The Psalmist describes with brutal realism the attitude of the rich who rob the poor: "They lie in wait that they may seize the poor... and drag them off in their net" (cf. *Ps* 10:9). As in a hunt, the poor are trapped, captured and enslaved. In a condition like this, the heart of many closes, and the desire to become invisible takes over.

The setting of the Psalm is tinged with sadness at the injustice, the suffering and the disappointment endured by the poor. At the same time, it offers a touching definition of the poor: they are those who "put their trust in the Lord" (cf. v. 10), in the certainty that they will never be forsaken. In the Scriptures, the poor are those who trust! The Psalmist also gives the reason for this trust: they "know" the Lord (cf. *ibid.*). In the language of the Bible, such "knowledge" involves a personal relationship of affection and love.

Impressive and completely unexpected as this description is, it simply expresses the grandeur of God, as shown in the way he relates to the poor.

[...] It is precisely this confidence in the Lord, this certainty of not being forsaken, that inculcates hope. The poor know that God cannot abandon them; hence, they live always in the presence of the God who is mindful of them. God's help extends beyond their present state of suffering in order to point out a path of liberation that profoundly strengthens and transforms the heart.

Scripture constantly speaks of God acting on behalf of the poor. He is the one who "hears" their cry" and "comes to their aid"; he "protects" and "defends" them; he "rescues" and "saves" them... Indeed, the poor will never find God indifferent or silent in the face of their plea. God is the one who renders justice and does not forget (cf. *Ps* 40:18; 70:6); he is their refuge and he never fails to come to their assistance (cf. *Ps* 10:14).

[...] In closeness to the poor, the Church comes to realize that she is one people, spread throughout many nations and called to ensure that no one feels a stranger or outcast, for she includes everyone in a shared journey of salvation. The situation of the poor obliges us not to keep our distance from the body of the Lord, who suffers in them. Instead, we are called to touch his flesh and to be personally committed in offering a service that is an authentic form of evangelization. Commitment to the promotion of the poor, including their social

promotion, is not foreign to the proclamation of the Gospel. On the contrary, it manifests the realism of Christian faith and its historical validity. The love that gives life to faith in Jesus makes it impossible for his disciples to remain enclosed in a stifling individualism or withdrawn into small circles of spiritual intimacy, with no influence on social life (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183).

Song

Invocations

After each invocation let us pray together: Ubi Caritas et amor (Taizé)

Lord, teach us to be docile to the Holy Spirit, so that the fire of love that has come to bring about the coming of the Kingdom may spread.

Lord, console those who suffer, support those who serve them with love, deliver us from all danger.

Lord, your presence is a comfort to those who are sick; teach us to carry our daily cross with you and to do our best to serve the poor and the suffering.

Lord, we believe in you and, trusting in your intercession, we entrust to you the path of the Church, the moral and spiritual growth of the young, vocations in all their forms and the work of the new evangelization.

Lord, we thank you for constantly giving us your trust. Help us to make choices that are in conformity with the Gospel, to manage our freedom in mutual service and in the love of Christ for the glory of the Father.

Lord, you always hear our petitions. Teach us to bless the Father in every circumstance of our life and to recognize that the Eucharist is the balm that heals our wounds and the food that leads us to eternal life.

After a brief pause of prayerful silence 4 readers will present the following passages.

Truth

First homily on love of the poor by Gregory of Nyssa, PG 46

The Christian in the face of poverty

The present time offers us a great abundance of naked and homeless people. An army of prisoners of war stands at everyone's doorstep. There is no lack of foreigners and exiles. Everywhere you can see outstretched arms, searching. For a house, they have the open sky, for a shelter, the porticos, the alleys, the deserted ravines of the squares; like owls, they hide in the cracks of walls. For clothes they have worn-out rags; for the harvest, the intuition of the merciful; for food, they beg from those they see by chance; for drink, fountains like animals; for a cup, their cupped hand; for the pantry, the breast, unless it disappears, but keeps what is in it; for a dining table, knees held close together; for a bed, the ground; for a bath, the river or the pond that God has given to everyone, in common and without art. The wandering, wild life had not been given to them from the beginning, but comes from suffering and misery.

You who fast, provide for them. Be generous towards unhappy brothers. What you take from the belly give to the poor. Righteous fear of God makes us equal: with your sobriety take care of two evils that are against each other: your satiety and your brother's hunger. So do doctors, too: they put some on a diet and subject the others to overeating, because with adding and the taking away, the health of each is regulated. Let yourself be persuaded by this healthy exhortation, reason will open the doors of the rich. The council can lead the poor to the rich. My speech should not enrich the poor. The eternal word of God grants them a house, a bed, a table. You alleviate misery with your substances with a familiar discourse. There are still sick and unfortunate people.

Everyone takes care of their neighbours; do not allow another to be interested in others. Be careful that another does not take away the treasure that has been entrusted to you. Embrace the unhappy person like gold: look after the sick like your health, like that of your wife, children, servants and the whole house. The destitute patient is doubly poor. In fact, healthy people in need go from door to door and go to the rich. Sitting down at the crossroads they call all the passers-by. Those who are stricken with illness, enclosed in crevices like Daniel in the pit, await you like Habakkuk, foresighted and lover of the poor (cf Dn 14: 31-39).

Become a partner of the prophet with alms. Run, without delay, to help the poor. The gift is not a loss. Don't worry: the fruit of almsgiving germinates in abundance. Offer clothing and you will fill the house with bundles of wheat.

You will say: I am also poor. Sara. Come on. Give what you have. In fact, God does not ask beyond one's strength. He gives one bread, another a glass of wine, another clothing, and so you help avoid the disaster of one. Moses did not receive the expense of the meeting tent from only one, but from all the people. The rich had given some gold and some silver, the poor leather, and the poorest among them wool (cf Es 10: 3-5). See how the widow's mite was superior to the offering of the rich? She poured out everything she owned; these, instead, had given a small part (cf Mk 12: 41-44).

Love...

From writings on St. Teresa of Calcutta

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

"Again, say it again!" The hands of the two women are clasped. Teresa embraces her, to hear those sweet words again, the most beautiful words that a human being can hear, in her last hours. And the woman dies, knowing that she is finally loved.

Justice

From the writings of Father Primo Mazzolari

A biased knowledge of the poor comes from abstract knowledge. We are ashamed of not having seen this or that film, of not having read such and such a book, of not having approached the man of the day, but no one is ashamed of not having seen a poor person.

Who knows a poor person?

Who has heard the heart of a poor person?

Who has followed him on his daily "way of the cross"?

Let's talk about justice, but we do not know where to place it!

We need an altar for the offering: and this altar is the poor. But we do not know how to approach them because we have never seen a poor person. Too many people dodge the poor so as not to meet them: too many people have not yet fixed their eyes on the face of a poor person, nor endured their smell! And often it is precisely those people who from morning to evening only talk about justice in the name of the poor!

I too thirst for justice, but I realized that justice is not a word for the town square on the eve of elections, or for the law that is then read as it is read: justice is the shoulder, arm, hand, conscience, heart ...

If we do not see the poor in this way, if we do not accept them in this way, once again we will build our little justice on sand. We will give ourselves laws that protect with hearts that devour. Without charity of the heart, everything becomes a devouring fire.

Mercy...

Testimony given by a young man who participated in the *World Day of the Poor* with Pope Francis

Yesterday (November 19, 2017) I was able to participate in an event that particularly touched me, namely the First World Day of the Poor called by Pope Francis.

As soon as I arrived in the hall, where lunch would be served, I was "overwhelmed" by the instinct to immediately help make the less fortunate "guests" happy to be at this lunch with the Pope participate for the first time.

We all helped arrange and set the tables, sing, laugh and joke, welcome and talk with all the guests.

The simplest conversations started with introducing ourselves or being interested in the mood of the moment.

I experienced a pang in my heart, and at times I felt like my heart would stop.

For a moment, I had the feeling of being smaller than "a mustard seed", you feel lucky to have what you have: even if it is only a hot meal and a roof over your head unlike many of the participants who did not even have a bed where they could lie down.

Only at times like these does one realize that we should not think "of the Other", who is very different from us, as an immigrant, but rather as a brother from a country at war: many of

them do not ask for anything and are satisfied with a word, a little attention and closeness from those who are caught up in the busyness of ordinary life who do not look and are not aware.

Some of the “guests” have remained in my heart because of their life stories, I am aware that I will never see many of them again, but I am equally convinced that each one I met has left a mark on my life.

I am well aware that I will not change my character or my participation in the life of others, but as happened in the Gospel episode of Our Lord, who by simply smearing mud on the eyes of the man born blind cured him and he could see, I too have had my eyes and my heart opened by the simplicity and genuineness of my "poor" brothers.

Reflection by the presider

Pause for a moment of silence

PRAYER FOR THE THIRD WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

The Priest invites the assembly to pray..

God and loving Father,

You who hear the cry of your Children particularly those who are poor and lack what is necessary to live, listen to our prayer that comes from the bottom of our hearts.

We know that you do not forget or ignore the cry of your suffering children, because you know each of us by name.

Today do not only hear my plea, but also hear that of all those who sometimes forget to turn to you. Listen to their profound suffering and give them peace and comfort.

We pray especially for those who must leave their homeland, for refugees, for young people without hope, for the homeless, for victims of violence, for those who have nothing and who suffer from loneliness and for all other forms of poverty that only You know.

Lord Jesus, you who are not afraid to identify with every poor person, help us to welcome them as only you know how to do, so that through our small gestures they can feel that we are at their side, finding the help they hoped for.

Make us witnesses of Christian hope, striving joyfully to offer gestures of solidarity and closeness that are the seeds of Your Kingdom.

AMEN.

PRAYER OF OUR FATHER

Presider:

Brothers and sisters, after listening to the words of the Lord and of the Church, aware of the need to overcome all forms of selfishness in order to enter into the joy of mutual acceptance, let us invoke the help of our heavenly Father with the words that the Lord has put on our lips:

All:

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Prayer

Presider:

Let us pray.
O God, help of the suffering and comfort of the poor,
by the example of your Son Jesus Christ
call us to love our brothers and sisters,
to hear their cry,
to be a sign of your hope that never disappoints,
fill us with your merciful love,

so that we can respond generously to the needs
of those who knock at the door of our heart.
We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who is God,
and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

R/. Amen.

Blessing

Priest with arms outstretched over the Assembly says:

O God our Father, your Mercy is without limits,
support your children because, guided by Your Word
they may never stray from the path of Love that runs
through the hearts of our brothers and sisters who are suffering and in need,
Holy Spirit give them strength, courage and tenacity
to help raise up those who are burdened by life.
Through Christ our Lord.

The assembly responds: Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God,
The Father, Son ✠ and Holy Spirit,
descend upon you and remain with you forever.

The assembly responds: Amen.

Dismissal:

P. Let us bless the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Or it is possible to follow with the

**EXPOSITION OF BLESSED EUCHARIST
AND ADORATION**

While the Blessed Sacrament is being exposed the following song is sung

ADORO TE DEVOTE

Choir

1. Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
quae sub his figuris vere latitas:
tibi se cor meum totum subiicit,
quia te contemplans totum defcit.

Assembly:

2. Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
sed auditu solo tuto creditur:
credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius:
nil hoc verbo Veritatis verius.

Choir

3. In cruce latebat sola Deitas,
at hic latet simul et humanitas:

ambo tamen credens atque confitens,
peto quod petivit latro poenitens.

Assembly :

4. Plagas, sicut Thomas, non intueor:

Deum tamen meum te confiteor;
fac me tibi semper magis credere,
in te spem habere, te diligere.

Choir

5. O memoriale mortis Domini!

Panis vivus vitam praestans homini!
Praesta meae menti de te vivere,
et te illi semper dulce sapere.

Assembly:

6. Pie pellicane, Iesu Domine!

Me immundum munda tuo Sanguine:
cuius una stilla salvum facere
totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.

Choir:

7. Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,

oro fiat illud quod tam sitio:
ut te revelata cernens facie,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae.

Choir and Assembly:

Amen.

Adoration and personal prayer in silence

Psalm of service

“Jesus calls us to be servants,
as He is a servant,
because men accept the message of Christ
not so much from those who experience the ascetic of purity
but from those who live the tribulations of service every day.
Jesus, you who washed the feet of poor fishermen,
Help us to understand
That the feet of the poor
are the goal of every serious spiritual journey.

When you were bent over by the heels of your disciples
You made us understand towards which basilicas
We should direct our pilgrimage.
In the Beatitudes you told us that the poor are blessed,
that is, that the poor are those who are saved.

But then you also added:

“Blessed are you when you help the poor,
when you give him food or drink,
when you host him or visit him.”

Therefore the poor are saved

As are those who are in solidarity with the poor.

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Come to the kingdom, blessed, because I was hungry

And you gave me food.”

In other words, you are telling us:

“Blessed are those who serve the poor,
those who share a common cause with the poor”.

Help us, Jesus, to be in solidarity with the poor

To be their friends and brothers.

Help us, Jesus, to know how to recognize you in the poor and the suffering,

so that one day they may welcome us into the Father's house!

(Father Tonino Bello).

Litany

Reader: Lord, Love is patient,

All: Give us the patience to know how to face one day after another.

Reader: Lord, Love is kind,

All: Help us to always want your good before mine.

Reader: Lord, Love is not envious,

All: Teach us to rejoice at every success.

Reader: Lord, Love does not boast,

All: Help us not to remind others of what I do for them.

Reader: Lord, Love is not swollen with pride,

All: Grant us the courage to say: "I was wrong".

Reader: Lord, Love is not disrespectful,

All: Let us see your face in his face.

Reader: Lord, Love does not seek personal interest,

All: Let the wind of gratuitousness blow in our lives.

Reader: Lord, Love does not get angry,

All: Take away the gestures and words that hurt others.

Reader: Lord, Love does not take into account the wrongdoing received,

Everyone: Reconcile with a forgiveness that forgets the wrong.

Reader: Lord, Love does not delight in injustice,

All: Open our hearts to the needs of those around us.

Reader: Lord, Love rejoices in the truth,

Everyone: Guide our steps towards you who are the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Reader: Lord, Love bears all things,

All: Help us to cover with Love the days we will live together.

Reader: Lord, Love believes everything,

All: Help us believe that Love moves mountains.

Reader: Lord, Love hopes all things,

All: Help us to hope in Love beyond all hope.

A suitable song

Choir:

1. Sei tu, Signore, il pane,

tu cibo sei per noi.

Risorto a vita nuova,

sei vivo in mezzo a noi.

L'assemblea:

2. Nell'ultima sua cena

Gesù si dona ai suoi:

«Prendete pane e vino,

la vita mia per voi».

La schola:

3. «Mangiate questo pane:

chi crede in me vivrà.

Chi bene il vino nuovo

con me risorgerà».

L'assemblea:

4. È Cristo il pane vero,

diviso qui fra noi:

formiamo un solo corpo

e Dio sarà con noi.

La schola:

5. Se porti la sua croce,

in lui tu regnerai.

Se muori unito a Cristo,

con lui rinascerai.

L'assemblea:

6. Verranno cieli nuovi,

la terra fiorirà.

Vivremo da fratelli:

la Chiesa è carità.

After the song, or another Eucharistic song, a short period of silence for personal prayer

EUCCHARISTIC BENEDICTION

TANTUM ERGO

Choir:

1. Tantum ergo sacramentum
veneremur cernui,
et antiquum documentum
novo cedat ritui;
praestet fides supplementum
sensum defectui.

1. *Adoriamo il Sacramento
che Dio Padre ci donò.
Nuovo patto, nuovo rito
nella fede si compì.
Al mistero è fondamento
la parola di Gesù.*

Assembly:

2. Genitori Genitoque
Laus et iubilatio,
salus, honor, virtus quoque
sit et benedictio;
procedenti ab utroque
compar sit laudatio.

2. *Gloria al Padre onnipotente,
gloria al Figlio Redentor,
lode grande, sommo onore
all'eterna Carità.
Gloria immensa, eterno amore
alla santa Trinità.*

La schola e l'assemblea:

Amen.

Orazione

Colui che presiede:

Presider:

Oremus.

Preghiamo.

Deus, qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili
passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti,
tribue, quaesumus,
ita nos Corporis et Sanguinis tui
sacra mysteria venerari,
ut redemptionis tuae fructum
in nobis iugiter sentiamus.

*Signore Gesù Cristo, che nel mirabile
sacramento dell'Eucaristia ci hai
lasciato il memoriale della tua Pasqua,
fa' che adoriamo con viva fede il santo
mistero del tuo Corpo e del tuo Sangue,
per sentire sempre in noi i benefici
della redenzione.*

Qui vivis et regnas in saecula saeculorum. *Tu sei Dio, e vivi e regni con Dio Padre,
nell'unità dello Spirito Santo,
per tutti i secoli dei secoli.*

R/. Amen.

Amen.

Let us pray,

Presider blesses the assembly with the Blessed Sacrament

Acclamations

The choir intones and the assembly repeats:

1. Benedictus Deus.
2. Benedictum Nomen Sanctum eius.
3. Benedictus Iesus Christus, verus Deus et verus homo.
4. Benedictum Nomen Iesu.
5. Benedictum Cor eius sacratissimum.
6. Benedictus Sanguis eius pretiosissimus.
7. Benedictus Iesus in sanctissimo altaris Sacramento.
8. Benedictus Sanctus Spiritus, Paraclitus.
9. Benedicta excelsa Mater Dei, Maria sanctissima.
10. Benedicta sancta eius et immaculata Conceptio.
11. Benedicta eius gloriosa Assumptio.
12. Benedictum nomen Mariae, Virginis et Matris.
13. Benedictus sanctus Ioseph, eius castissimum Sponsus.
14. Benedictus Deus in Angelis suis, et in Sanctis suis.

Amen.

1. Dio sia benedetto.
 2. Benedetto il suo santo nome.
 3. Benedetto Gesù Cristo vero Dio e vero uomo.
 4. Benedetto il nome di Gesù.
 5. Benedetto il Suo Sacratissimo Cuore.
 6. Benedetto il Suo preziosissimo Sangue.
 7. Benedetto Gesù nel Santissimo Sacramento dell'altare.
 8. Benedetto lo Spirito Santo Paraclito.
 9. Benedetta la gran Madre di Dio Maria Santissima.
 10. Benedetta la Sua Santa e Immacolata Concezione.
 11. Benedetta la Sua gloriosa Assunzione.
 12. Benedetto il nome di Maria Vergine e Madre.
 13. Benedetto San Giuseppe Suo castissimo sposo.
 14. Benedetto Dio nei Suoi angeli e nei Suoi santi.
- Amen.**

Blessed be God.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.

Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.

Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.

Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

Amen.

Song while the Blessed Sacrament is being reposed

Song of reposition

Psalm 116

Choir:

1. Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes;
laudate eum, omnes populi.

1. *Lodate il Signore, popoli tutti,
voi tutte, nazioni, dategli gloria;*

Assembly:

2. Quoniam confirmata est super nos
misericordia eius,
et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.

2. *perché forte è il suo amore per noi
e la fedeltà del Signore dura in eterno.*

La schola:

Choir:

3. Gloria Patri et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.

3. *Gloria al Padre e al Figlio
e allo Spirito Santo*

L'assemblea:

4. Sicut erat in principio,
et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

4. *come era nel principio
e ora e sempre
nei secoli dei secoli. Amen.*

Marian antiphon

SALVE, REGINA

Choir and Assembly:

Salve, Regina,
Mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae.
Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.
Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis, post hoc exsilium, ostende.
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria!

*Salve, Regina,
Madre di misericordia,
vita, dolcezza e speranza nostra, salve.
A te ricorriamo, esuli figli di Eva.
A te sospiriamo, gementi e piangenti
in questa valle di lacrime.
Orsù dunque, avvocata nostra,
rivolgi a noi gli occhi tuoi misericordiosi.
E mostraci, dopo questo esilio, Gesù,
il frutto benedetto del tuo seno.
O clemente, o pia,
o dolce Vergine Maria!*

Holy Rosary

The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever

How is the Holy Rosary recited?

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

O God come to my assistance.

Lord, make haste to help me.

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

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 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 Lauretan Litanies or other Marian prayers are recited.

Introduction

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

The Lord does not abandon those who seek him and call upon his name: "He does not forget the cry of the poor" (Ps 9:12), for his ears are attentive to their voice. The hope of the poor defies deadly situations, for the poor know that they are especially loved by God, and this is stronger than any suffering or exclusion. Poverty does not deprive them of their God-given dignity; they live in the certainty that it will be fully restored to them by God himself, who is not indifferent to the lot of his lowliest sons and daughters. On the contrary, he sees their struggles and sorrows, he takes them by the hand, and he gives them strength and courage.

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

T. 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)

From the Book of Proverbs (Prov 30:7-9)

Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, “Who is the Lord?” or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

The economic crisis has not prevented large groups of people from accumulating fortunes that often appear all the more incongruous when, in the streets of our cities, we daily encounter great numbers of the poor who lack the bare necessities of life and are at times harassed and exploited. The centuries pass, but the condition of rich and poor remains constant, as if history has taught us nothing.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

O Mary, Mother of the Poor.

Pray for us

Let us pray: Virgin of the Poor, accompany us to Jesus, the only source of grace and teach us docility to the Holy Spirit, so that the fire of love that came to bring about the advent of his Kingdom may flare up.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen

or: Virgin Mary, light of those who walk in darkness, bolster the steps of those whose dignity is exploited and mortified, so that they can live in the certainty that God is not indifferent to the fate of his children.

Through Christ our Lord.

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 hidden 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 son, deprive not the poor of his living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. Do not grieve the one who is hungry, nor anger a man in want. Do not add to the troubles of an angry mind, nor delay your gift to a beggar. Do not reject an afflicted suppliant, nor turn your face away from the poor. Incline your ear to the poor, and answer him peaceably and gently.”

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

Daily we encounter *families* forced to leave their homeland to seek a living elsewhere; *orphans* who have lost their parents or were violently torn from them by brutal means of exploitation; *young people* seeking professional fulfilment but prevented from employment by short-sighted economic policies; *victims* of different kinds of violence, ranging from prostitution to the narcotics trade, and profoundly demeaned. How can we overlook, too, the millions of *immigrants* who fall victim to any number of concealed interests, often exploited for political advantage, and are refused solidarity and equality? And all the *homeless* and ostracized persons who roam the streets of our cities?

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

O Mary, Mother of the Poor.

Pray for us

Let us pray: Virgin of the Poor, who said: “Believe in me, I will believe in you”, we thank you for giving us your trust. Make us capable of making choices in conformity with the Gospel, help us manage our freedom in mutual service and in the love of Christ for the glory of the Father. Amen

or: Virgin Mary, support of those who hope in you, keep in your heart all those who are forced to leave their homeland, so that they may find acceptance in the solidarity of their brothers.

Through Christ our Lord.

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”. (Ps 113:7,8)

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

“And the first-born of the poor will feed, and the needy lie down in safety; “The Lord has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge.”

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

In the Scriptures, the poor are those who trust! It is precisely this confidence in the Lord, this certainty of not being forsaken, that inculcates hope. The poor know that God cannot abandon them; hence, they live always in the presence of the God who is mindful of them. God’s help extends beyond their present state of suffering in order to point out a path of liberation that profoundly strengthens and transforms the heart.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

O Mary, Mother of the Poor.

Pray for us

Let us pray: Virgin of the Poor, save the nations: help us to be guided by wise leaders and obtain for us the grace that all peoples be reconciled and in agreement in order to be one fold under one shepherd.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

or: Virgin Mary, consoler of the sick and disheartened, take care of those who live in precarious situations and marginalization, so that by trusting always in the fidelity of the Lord their hearts can be reopened to hope.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Fourth Mystery

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

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound”. (Is 61:1)

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

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven”.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

“Blessed are you who are poor” (Lk 6:20)? The meaning of this paradoxical message is that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor because they are in a position to receive it. How many poor people do we encounter each day! It seems that the passage of time and the advances of civilization increase their numbers rather than diminishing them. Centuries go by and the Beatitude appears even more paradoxical: the poor are always poorer, and today they are poorer than ever. Yet Jesus who inaugurated his kingdom by placing the poor at the centre, wanted to tell us precisely this: he *inaugurated* the kingdom, but he has entrusted to us, his disciples, the task of carrying it forward with responsibility for giving hope to the poor.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

O Mary, Mother of the Poor.

Pray for us

Let us pray: Virgin of the Poor, comfort the sick with your presence; teach us to carry our daily cross with Jesus and help us commit ourselves to the service of the poor and the suffering.

Amen

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

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Fifth mystery

Lord, help me to live in communion with You and our brothers and sisters

“Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And 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 were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need”. (Ac 4:32-35)

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

“Come, O blessed of 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 drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me”.

From the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Day of the Poor

Before all else, the poor need God and his love, made visible by “the saints next door”, people who by the simplicity of their lives express clearly the power of Christian love. God uses any number of ways and countless means to reach people’s hearts.[...] The poor need our hands, to be lifted up; our hearts, to feel anew the warmth of affection; our presence, to overcome loneliness. In a word, they need love.[...] The poor are persons to be encountered; they are lonely, young and old, to be invited to our homes to share a meal; men women and children who look for a friendly word. The poor save us because they enable us to encounter the face of Jesus Christ.

Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, Glory be ...

O Mary, Mother of the Poor.

Pray for us

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 that 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. Amen

or: Virgin Mary, welcoming womb of one who lives in solitude and abandonment, do not allow any of your children to suffer from lack of warmth and friendship but find brothers and sisters willing to welcome them and offer them a friendly word.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen

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 vale of tears.
Turn then, 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!

Evangelical Litany (Mt 5:1-12)

Mary, Mother of the poor in spirit,	pray for us
Mary Mother of the afflicted	"
Mary Mother of the gentle	"
Mary, Mother of those who are hungry and thirsty for justice	"
Mary Mother of the merciful	"
Mary Mother of the pure of heart	"
Mary Mother of peacekeepers	"
Mary Mother of the persecuted	"

Let us pray

Lord Jesus, our brother, we pray to you for the poor,
for the sick, for the old, 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 see themselves surpassed by everyone,
for the exploited, alcoholics, prostitutes.
For those who are alone, for those who are tired.

Free believers, O Lord,
from thinking that an act of charity is enough to heal so many sufferings.
We will always have the poor with us:
they are the sign of our poverty as travellers,
symbol of our disappointments,
scraps of our desperations.
We will always have them with us, indeed, within us.
Grant O Lord to your people on the way
the honour of seeing who stopped along the way
and to be ready to give him a hand to put him back on the road
in the certainty that those who hope in you will not be disappointed.
Amen.

(Bishop Tonino Bello, Words of Love)

Or:

Litany to Mary Mother of the Poor (from the Church of France)

Lord, have mercy	Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy	Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy	Lord, have mercy
Christ, hear us	Christ, hear us
Christ, graciously hear us	Christ, graciously hear us
God the Father, our creator,	have mercy on us

God the Son, our redeemer, have mercy on us

God the Holy Spirit, our sanctifier, have mercy on us

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us

Saint Mary lead our way

Holy Mother of God light our path

Holy Virgin of Virgins, give us your Son

Daughter of the people of God guide our journey

Virgin of Nazareth light our path

Elected among women give us your Son

Simple virgin in our hearts guide our journey

Spouse of Joseph the worker light our way

Queen of the family, give us your Son

Woman of our people guide our journey

Hope of the oppressed light our path

Trust of the poorest give us your Son

Virgin, Mother of Christ	guide our journey
Virgin, Mother of the Church	light our path
Virgin, Mother of men,	give us your Son
Mother who knows us	guide our journey
Mother who listens to us	light our way
Mother who understands us	give us your Son
Virgin daughter of man	guide our path
Daughter of a pilgrim people	light our way
Living Presence in History	give us your Son
Mother who knows pain	guide our path
Mother at the foot of the cross	light our way
Mother for those who suffer	give us your Son
Our Lady of joy	guide our journey
Luminous Virgin	light our way
Queen of peace	give us your Son

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, forgive us, O Lord

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, hear us, O Lord

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Pray for us, holy mother of God that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray

Good Father, grant us to glorify your infinite goodness with Mary, and to always enjoy her protection, for in her you have given us a queen who is merciful to the poor and to sinners. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Pastoral Suggestions

The challenge of every Christian is to love as Christ loved. To look at every human person with acceptance and respect, whatever his or her situation or faith. It is this love in Jesus Christ that impels us to build his Kingdom, a Kingdom of justice, peace and love. This love seeks to concretise the presence of God who bends down to every creature. It is this same God who, with our help, cares for the needs of the poorest to bring them peace and comfort, so that they may discover that their hope will not perish forever. With Him we can break all the chains that hold man prisoner in today's world. Before all those who live in difficulty we cannot remain silent nor cross our arms. This fire of the Spirit that burns in us, gives us a sincere concern for our brothers and sisters in need, to nurse their wounds, raise them up and to heal them. But to get there, you have to get busy with joy and determination. The well-being of the other must be our only concern, because it is here that we meet Christ: "*Every time you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me*" (Mt 25:40).

Apparent poverty and hidden poverty.

The poor make up a large segment of our society. It would be reductive to use the word poor only for the homeless we meet on the streets of big cities. There is visible poverty, but there is also hidden poverty. Who are these hidden poor? They are the many parents who struggle, sometimes even with a job, to support their family. They are single-parent families who with or without social support have difficulty achieving their often times very simple dreams. They are adolescents enslaved by drugs, no longer able to dream of their future. They are also the many elderly people who, at the end of their lives, are still worried about whether or not they will be able to keep their home or even if they will be able to feed themselves or care for themselves to the end. Faith in the Lord that never disappoints the expectations of the poor, encourages us to open our eyes to the many forms of poverty, visible and invisible.

The purpose of the *World Day of the Poor* must not be limited to a single event or a single day of the year. It is not enough to make a short visit to a centre that helps the poor, shake their hands and wish them good luck. The *Day* can be the occasion for at least three important things: firstly to highlight and celebrate the activities accomplished during the year.

Secondly, it is an opportunity to evaluate and identify the areas that could be changed and new ideas for next year. Finally, the realization and updating of the activities chosen.

We can really make a difference by living the closeness and solidarity of the Gospel. Knowing that the Lord does not forget the cry of the poor, it is up to us to unfold his Kingdom, to be a reflection of Christ for them, just as they are for us.

Suggestions

Create opportunities for meetings at a community level (diocesan, parish, religious communities) to pray, reflect and try to read the *signs of the times* together, in order to be able to respond to the needs present in the different social situations in which we live, which differ from one country to another.

Young people and their families

- Offer times of study and discussion, conferences on various topics: violence (family, marital, social), on self-care and emotions, self-esteem, respect, the dimension of Christian love, the gift of self, etc.
- Do an activity with young people from disadvantaged families, entertain them and encourage integration.
- Offer a show with local artists, singers, actors, circus, etc.
- Promote sports, theatre, workshops, etc.
- Offer a movie outdoors or in community rooms.
- Organize activities for needy families, to give them an opportunity share a creative time together, where they can be appreciated.
- Organize a *treasure hunt* for young people.

Activities

- Evening outdoors with singing and offering a hot drink and something to eat.
- A night for *the homeless* with a walk together with the parishioners, a musical show, a festive atmosphere (donating shoes, sleeping bags, warm clothing for the winter, some comfort items).
- Start a public garden. Plant fruit trees around the church that will serve everyone in the future.
- Find a small job to do with them that could help the community. The objective is to learn to give as well as to receive.

For the elderly and the sick

- Visit them frequently.
- Organize festive times.
- Offer free courses so they can learn to use a computer or social networks

Involving parishioners

- A few weeks before the event, organize times for *training* and providing *information* for the parishioners about the theme, to raise their consciousness of the problems and the commitment.
- Involve the elderly (perhaps together with young people) in making/knitting socks, hats, gloves, and scarves that could be donated on the *World Day of the Poor*.

Suggestions to carry out throughout the year

- Form a choir that includes the poor. (This allows people to regain confidence, helps them have a time schedule, requires discipline and helps them see that they can give something to others). A concert can be planned in connection with the *World Day of the Poor*, as well as for other celebrations throughout the pastoral year (Christmas, Easter, patron saint celebration, etc.).
- Create a *friend network* of volunteers for the elderly to ensure they are visited, cared for, and receive phone calls regularly to check on them.
- Parish communities strengthen their relationships with other solidarity organizations present in the area, promoting cooperation to optimise activities in favour of the most needy.
- Set up a joint kitchen or food collection points.
- Teach people how to cook at low cost, cooking together and how to eat healthily.
- Establish summer camps or day camps for children of families in difficulty.

(IV Back cover)

THE LOGO OF THE WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

The logo of the *World Day of the Poor* reflects sharing. There is an open door with two people on either side. Both are holding out their hand; one because he or she is asking for help, the other because he or she intends to offer help. In fact, it is difficult to understand which of the two is really poor. Or rather, both are poor. Whoever holds out their hand for help asks for sharing; whoever holds out their hand to help is invited to go out to share. They are two outstretched hands that meet where each is offering something. Two arms that express solidarity, encouraging them not to remain on the threshold, but rather to go towards the other. The poor can enter the house, once those in the house understand that to help means to share. In this context the words of Pope Francis in the *Message for the World Day of the Poor* become ever more meaningful: “Blessed, therefore, are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes”: they are hands that call down God’s blessing upon their brothers and sisters”. (Pope Francis, 2017 First World Day of the Poor)

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