



## Fifth World Day of the Poor - Press Release



PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Fifth World Day of the Poor

Sunday, November 14, 2021

This coming November 14 sees the fifth celebration of the *World Day of the Poor*. An initiative strongly desired by Pope Francis in order to urge the Church and the faithful to 'go out' to encounter poverty in the various ways it manifests itself in the modern world and in order to reach out to those most in need. This year the motto chosen to promote the Day comes from Saint Mark's Gospel: "*The poor you will always have with you*" (Mk 14:7), made known as usual through the Holy Father's Message released on the day of Saint Anthony of Padua, last June 13. As it does every year, the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the Vatican Dicastery charged by the Pope with promoting the event, has organized several initiatives that will be carried out in the week leading up to this day.

### **Pope Francis' Meeting with the Poor at Assisi**

On Friday, November 12, The Holy Father will make a private visit to the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli ('Saint Mary of the Angels') at Assisi where he will meet with a group of 500 poor people from different parts of Europe and will spend time *listening to* and *praying with* them. The Pope will be welcomed by the 'embrace of the poor' who will bestow on him the pilgrim's cloak and staff before accompanying him in procession to the Basilica. First Pope Francis, following in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi, will pause to pray at the Portiuncula, one of the most important places in the life of the Saint, where he loved to welcome his friars and many poor people, and where Saint Clare decided to consecrate herself to the Lord. There, at the end of the celebration, the Holy Father will make the significant gesture of blessing a stone previously taken from the Portiuncula by the Franciscan Friars (the Order of Friars Minor - OFM) of Umbria, destined for homeless shelter 'Roses of Saint Francis' of Trsat, founded in 2007 by the local fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order of Trsat, in the city of Rijeka, Croatia, whose representatives will be present.

The 500 poor people present will come from the dioceses of Umbria led by Caritas, from the French association 'Fratello', and from Rome in a delegation organized by the Papal Almoner and the

following associations: 'Caritas' of the Diocese of Rome, the Circle of Saint Peter ('*Circolo San Pietro*'), the Community of Saint Egidio ('*Comunità di Sant'Egidio*'), the Regional Coordination of the Vincentian Family ('*Coordinamento Regionale Famiglia Vincenziana*'), the Astalli Center ('*Centro Astalli*'), the Roman branch of the Christian Association of Italian Workers ('*Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani, - Acli di Roma*') and the French association *Brother* ('*Fratello*'). At the end of the day, 500 backpacks, produced within the project '+Three', which promotes products made in respect of environmental and economic sustainability within an ethical and socially useful supply chain, will be donated to the participants. These backpacks contain winter clothing, donated by Tombolini, a well-known Italian brand name, made up of sweaters, scarves, hats, jackets, and fabric anti Covid-19 masks.

### **Celebration of Holy Mass in St. Peter's Basilica**

On Sunday, November 14 at 10:00 a.m., the Holy Father will preside over the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Saint Peter's Basilica, with the participation of 2,000 poor people, in compliance with current health regulations, assisted by various voluntary associations present in the Rome area. The biblical readings the prayers of the faithful will be proclaimed by some of the poor. At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, hot meals will be distributed to all participants. Tickets for the celebration may be obtained from the offices of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization in 7 Via della Conciliazione, from Thursday, November 11, to Saturday, November 13, from 08:30 to 13:30.

### **Distribution of Food and Other Products**

This year, Pope Francis has wished to reserve special attention to group homes ('*Case-Famiglia*') present in the territory of the Diocese of Rome. Often offering a place to live, these structures welcome people, mainly adolescents or children together with their mothers, who are deeply in need of a protected space where they can grow up, receive an education or have an opportunity to start a new life through a gradual integration into society. In the territory, there is a very large number of Group Homes of all kinds, offering different services and opportunities. The material needs for managing these structures are often considerable, making it not always possible to organize an adequate response. For this reason, it has been decided, through the generosity of the *Elite Supermarket* chain and of pasta producer *La Molisana* ('*Antico Molino e Pastificio*'), which has donated pasta and tomato puree, to help 40 group homes by delivering directly to their premises, a supply of food and personal care products, especially baby food, sufficient for almost two months. Similar food packs will also be delivered to local parishes and charitable organizations. In total, about 5 tonnes of pasta, 1 tonne of rice, 2 tonnes of tomato puree, 1,000 liters of oil and 3,000 liters of milk will be distributed, just to name a few of the many items that were most requested and that will make up the various food packs to be delivered by a team of volunteers.

### **Distribution to Families of Health and Personal Hygiene Items**

Another initiative will consist in the distribution five thousand medical "kits", containing some of the main "over-the-counter" medicines (or OTC), to about sixty parishes in Rome who will get them to the needy families on their territory.

Due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it has not been possible over the last two years to set up the Medical Unit in Saint Peter's Square. The structure, a real 'field hospital', provided numerous free medical services to the poor, referred by various voluntary associations, and for whom it would normally be impossible to access these services. This year, therefore, wishing to offer a sign of closeness to people requiring specific medical assistance, and with the scope of continuing the screening activities and visits in Saint Peter's Square, the initiative "*Looking for the Virus*" will be carried out, as it has already been done in the past. Therefore, a camper equipped to carry out

tests to evaluate the presence of the HCV virus (Hepatitis C) and the HIV virus, will be present in Saint Peter's Square during the *World Day of the Poor*, Sunday, November 14. The service will be available to the poor who visit the camper - which will open immediately after the Holy Father finishes the recitation of the Angelus, shortly after 12:00 noon and remain open until 6:00 p.m. The project is realized with the help of the company Regia Congressi S.r.l., the S.I.M.G. ('Italian Society of General and Primary Care Medicine'), the Department of Infectious Diseases of the Tor Vergata University Hospital in Rome and the Italian Red Cross Volunteer Nursing Corps.

## **Electricity and Gas Bills**

It is now, and every day more and more, dramatically evident how the Covid-19 pandemic has generated new forms of poverty and significantly worsened those which were already in existence. In addition to support given through the distribution of food and medicines, this celebration of the *World Day of the Poor* will also be characterized by another initiative made possible by the generosity of UnipolSai. About 500 families, who are experiencing economic difficulties and are often forced turn to charitable centers, will receive assistance in paying their gas and electricity bills. These are families who would otherwise be forced to privilege paying these bills over food or medical expenses. As Pope Francis made clear in his *Message for the World Day of the Poor*: 'Some countries are suffering extremely severe consequences from the pandemic, so that the most vulnerable of their people lack basic necessities. The long lines in front of soup kitchens are a tangible sign of this deterioration' (n.5).

This *World Day of the Poor*, with all the initiatives that will take place in dioceses around the world, is a small but significant response to Pope Francis' call to help the poor.

*Intervento di*

Mons. Graham Bell

*Sotto-Segretario del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione della Nuova Evangelizzazione*

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