



Press Release



For the VIII World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis has chosen a particularly significant motto for this year dedicated to prayer, given that the day will be celebrated shortly before the beginning of the Jubilee Year of 2025: "The prayer of the poor rises up to God" (cf Sir 21.5). Given the context, this expression, which comes from the ancient sacred author Ben Sira, has an immediate and clear impact.

The Pope reiterates that the poor have a privileged place in the heart of God, who is attentive and close to each of them. God listens to the prayers of the poor and, in the face of suffering, becomes "impatient" until he has done them justice. In fact, the book of Sirach goes further, stating that, "the judgment of God will be in favor of the poor" (see 21.5).

The next *World Day of the Poor* will be held on November 17, 2024, and the Holy Father will preside, as usual, at Mass in the Vatican in St. Peter's Basilica. This will be followed by the traditional lunch with poor people in the Paul VI Hall, organized, as last year, by the Dicastery for Charity, while the Dicastery for Evangelization will provide for the needs of the neediest through various charitable initiatives. The week before the Day of Prayer, all parish and diocesan communities will be asked to focus on the needs of the poor in their local area through practical initiatives and by making this effort a priority in their pastoral work.

In his *Message*, Pope Francis invites everyone to learn to pray for the poor and to pray together with the poor, with humility and trust. *World Day of the Poor* is an opportunity to become aware of the presence of the poor in our cities and communities, and to understand their needs. As always, the Pope also mentions the "new poor", those who are victims of violence and wars, "bad politics carried out with weapons" (n. 4), which causes many innocent victims.

The Pope reiterates that prayer must find its true authenticity by being expressed in concrete works of charity. In fact, prayer and good works go together: "If prayer is not translated into concrete action it is in vain; (...) however, charity without prayer risks becoming philanthropy which soon runs out" (n. 7). This is the legacy which many saints in history have left us, such as Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who always repeated that prayer was the place from which she drew the faith and the strength she needed to serve the poor. In the *Message* we also find the example of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre,

the "wanderer of God", a poor man himself who lived among the poor, whose tomb is in the Roman church of *Santa Maria ai Monti*, and which is venerated by many pilgrims each year.

Let us not forget, however, the numerous people in our cities who continue to dedicate a large part of their time to listening to and supporting the poor. They are ordinary people who, with their example, "give voice to God's response to the prayers of those who turn to Him" (n.7). The *World Day of the Poor* is also an opportunity to remember each of them and thank the Lord for them.

Pope Francis' *Message* for this VIII *World Day of the Poor*, therefore, invites everyone to pay more serious spiritual attention to the poor, who need God and need a human presence – someone who is a concrete sign of listening and closeness to them.