



World Day of the Poor, Joseph: “I want everyone to experience the mercy of the Lord in an encounter with their wounded brothers.”

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“Thanks to my work as a volunteer with the Fratello Association, I met Ludo,” says Joseph, a young 31-year-old French volunteer. “He lived on the street, and after World Youth Day in Lisbon, which we experienced together, he decided to change his life. He began to pray every day and now he has asked to make his first holy communion. I thank God for this encounter.” Joseph spoke about his experience of service with the less fortunate on the occasion of the 7th World Day of the Poor, which will be celebrated on Sunday 19 November. For him “the poor are a gift”.

What does “Do not look away from the poor” mean for your life?

“I feel this sentence is addressed to me, to help me to pay attention to the immense treasure that these people represent and to remind me not to pass by. Because so many poor people receive nothing but indifference and contempt. Personally, I have had experiences of fraternity with many fragile people. That phrase - Do not look away from the poor - means entering into a relationship with everyone and discovering the person as a gift, as the face of Jesus, simple, close, much loved.”

Why did you decide to dedicate some of your time to the neediest in society with the "Fratello Association"? What do you actually do?

With the *Associazione Fratello*, we organize celebrations for fragile people all over the world. By doing this, we perceive that we are at the service of the Church and of the poor because, and I am sure of this, each encounter transforms hearts when it is a true encounter, authentic, profound, and prayerful. With *Fratello* we create a climate that makes this possible for many people. And then, let's not forget that it is the Lord who speaks to everyone's heart. I sincerely desire that everyone can experience the Lord's mercy in prayer and through an encounter with our brothers and sisters who are wounded."

In your service to the poor, can you think of a story, a particular face of someone for whom you thanked God or asked Him for a special favor?

"Yes, I think of Ludo who came with us to World Youth Day. He doesn't have an easy life, he didn't really know the Lord before he came, and he didn't have much self-confidence. He is a person who really moves you, a person with a big heart. In Lisbon he told 400 young people about his life journey and testified how he was helped to get off the streets. He was so happy to have been able to share those experiences. His words were really significant for the young people. We shared the experience of those days together in Portugal, and we had really beautiful discussions, beautiful moments of prayer. But returning to ordinary life is not always easy. But he began to pray every day and now he has asked to make his first holy communion and he has started his preparation. His is the face for which I thank God, a brother I have met, a person I love. Thank you Lord."