Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 9th World Day of the Poor - 16 November 2025

13 June 2025

1. “You, O Lord, are my hope” (*Ps* 71:5). These words well up from a heart burdened by grave hardship: “You have made me see many troubles and calamities” (v. 20), the Psalmist exclaims. At the same time, his heart remains open and confident; steadfast in faith, he acknowledges the support of God, whom he calls “a rock of refuge, a strong fortress” (v. 3). Hence, his abiding trust that hope in God never disappoints: “In you, Lord, I take refuge; I shall never be put to shame” (v. 1).

Amid life’s trials, our hope is inspired by the firm and reassuring certainty of God’s love, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That hope does not disappoint (cf. *Rom* 5:5). Thus Saint Paul could write to Timothy: “To this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God” (1 *Tim* 4:10). The living God is in fact “the God of hope” (*Rom* 15:13), and Christ, by his death and resurrection, has himself become “our hope” (1 *Tim* 1:1). We must never forget that we were saved in this hope, and need to remain firmly rooted therein.

2. The poor can be witnesses to a strong and steadfast hope, precisely because they embody it in the midst of uncertainty, poverty, instability and marginalization. They cannot rely on the security of power and possessions; on the contrary, they are at their mercy and often victims of them. Their hope must necessarily be sought elsewhere. By recognizing that God is our first and only hope, we too pass from fleeting *hopes* to a lasting *hope*. Once we desire that God accompany us on the journey of life, material wealth becomes relativized, for we discover the real treasure that we need. The words that the Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples remain forceful and clear: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal” (*Mt* 6:19-20).

3. The gravest form of poverty is not to know God. As Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the

poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith" (No. 2000). Here we see a basic and essential awareness of how we can find our treasure in God. As the Apostle John insists: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 *Jn* 4:20).

This is a rule of faith and the secret of hope: all this earth's goods, material realities, worldly pleasures, economic prosperity, however important, cannot bring happiness to our hearts. Wealth often disappoints and can lead to tragic situations of poverty — above all the poverty born of the failure to recognize our need for God and of the attempt to live without him. A saying of Saint Augustine comes to mind: "Let all your hope be in God: feel your need for him, and let him fill that need. Without him, whatever you possess will only make you all the more empty" (*Enarr. in Ps.*, 85:3).

4. The word of God tells us that Christian hope is certainty at every step of life's journey, since it does not depend not on our human strength but upon the promise of God, who is always faithful. For this reason, from the beginning, Christians have identified hope with the symbol of the anchor, which provides stability and security. Christian hope is like an anchor that grounds our hearts in the promise of the Lord Jesus, who saved us by his death and resurrection and will come again among us. This hope continues to point us toward the "new heavens" and the "new earth" (2 *Pet* 3:13) as the true horizon of our existence, where every life will find its authentic meaning, for our real homeland is in heaven (cf. *Phil* 3:20).

The city of God, therefore, impels us to improve the cities of men and women. Our own cities must begin to resemble his. Hope, sustained by God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom* 5:5), turns human hearts into fertile soil where charity for the life of the world can blossom. The Church's tradition has constantly insisted on the circular relationship between the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Hope is born of faith, which nourishes and sustains it on the foundation of charity, the mother of all virtues. All of us need charity, here and now. Charity is not just a promise; it is a present reality to be embraced with joy and responsibility. Charity engages us and guides our decisions towards the common good. Conversely, those who lack charity not only lack faith and hope; they also rob their neighbors of hope.

5. The biblical summons to hope thus entails the duty to shoulder our responsibilities in history, without hesitation. Charity, in fact, "is the greatest social commandment" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1889). Poverty has structural causes that must be addressed and eliminated. In the meantime, each of us is called to offer new signs of hope that will bear witness to Christian charity, just as many saints have done over the centuries. Hospitals and schools, for instance, were institutions established to reach out to the most vulnerable and marginalized. These institutions should be a part of every country's public policy, yet wars and inequalities often prevent this from happening. Today, signs of hope are increasingly found in care homes, communities for minors, centers for listening

and acceptance, soup kitchens, homeless shelters and low-income schools. How many of these quiet signs of hope often go unnoticed and yet are so important for setting aside our indifference and inspiring others to become involved in various forms of volunteer work!

The poor are not a distraction for the Church, but our beloved brothers and sisters, for by their lives, their words and their wisdom, they put us in contact with the truth of the Gospel. The celebration of the World Day of the Poor is meant to remind our communities that the poor are at the heart of all our pastoral activity. This is true not only of the Church's charitable work, but also of the message that she celebrates and proclaims. God took on their poverty in order to enrich us through their voices, their stories and their faces. Every form of poverty, without exception, calls us to experience the Gospel concretely and to offer effective signs of hope.

6. This, then, is the invitation extended to us by this Jubilee celebration. It is no coincidence that the World Day of the Poor is celebrated towards the end of this year of grace. Once the Holy Door is closed, we are to cherish and share with others the divine gifts granted us throughout this entire year of prayer, conversion and witness. The poor are not recipients of our pastoral care, but creative subjects who challenge us to find novel ways of living out the Gospel today. In the face of new forms of impoverishment, we can risk becoming hardened and resigned. Each day we encounter poor or impoverished people. We too may have less than before and are losing what once seemed secure: a home, sufficient food for each day, access to healthcare and a good education, information, religious freedom and freedom of expression.

In this promotion of the common good, our social responsibility is grounded in God's creative act, which gives everyone a share in the goods of the earth. Like those goods, the fruits of human labor should be equally accessible to all. Helping the poor is a matter of justice before a question of charity. As Saint Augustine observed: "You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better if none were hungry, so that you would have no need to give it away. You clothe the naked, but would that all were clothed and that there be no need for supply this lack" (*In I Ioan.,* 8:5).

It is my hope, then, that this Jubilee Year will encourage the development of policies aimed at combatting forms of poverty both old and new, as well as implementing new initiatives to support and assist the poorest of the poor. Labor, education, housing and health are the foundations of a security that will never be attained by the use of arms. I express my appreciation for those initiatives that already exist, and for the efforts demonstrated daily on the international level by great numbers of men and women of good will.

Let us entrust ourselves to Mary Most Holy, Comforter of the Afflicted and, with her, let us raise a song of hope as we make our own the words of the *Te Deum*: “In you, O Lord, is our hope, and we shall never hope in vain.”

From the Vatican, 13 June 2025, Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua, Patron Saint of the Poor

LEO PP. XIV