

## November 2017 World Day of the Poor – Part 1

This year, on November 19, the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Universal Church will be celebrating the first *World Day of the Poor*.

When inaugurating this special day, Pope Francis explained why he has focused on the poor. “We know how hard it is for our contemporary world to see poverty clearly for what it is, yet in myriad ways poverty challenges us daily,

*in faces marked by suffering, marginalization, oppression,  
violence, torture and imprisonment, war,  
deprivation of freedom and dignity, ignorance and illiteracy,  
medical emergencies and shortage of work,  
trafficking and slavery, exile, extreme poverty and forced migration.  
Poverty has the face of women, men and children exploited by base interests,  
crushed by the machinations of power and money.  
What a bitter and endless list we would have to compile were we to add  
the poverty born of social injustice, moral degeneration,  
the greed of a chosen few, and generalized indifference!  
We are not talking about statistics, we are talking about people”.* (Vatican 13 June 2017)

For this reason, Pope Francis has asked all of us to focus our prayer and our response to the poor in a special way during this month of November.

“At the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy, I wanted to offer the Church a *World Day of the Poor*, so that throughout the world Christian communities can become an ever greater sign of Christ’s charity for the least and those most in need. This *Day* is meant, above all, to encourage believers to *react against a culture of discard and waste, and to embrace the culture of encounter*. At the same time, everyone, independent of religious affiliation, is invited to *openness and sharing with the poor through concrete signs of solidarity and fraternity*.” (Vatican 13 June 2017)

As a practical sign of solidarity, on November 19, Pope Francis will invite 500 poor people to lunch in the Vatican. He will do this, he said, because ‘the Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen, through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters.’

*Henri Nouwen highlighted this when he wrote: “The church as the people of God can truly embody the living Christ among us only when the poor remain its most treasured part. Care for the poor therefore, is much more than Christian charity. It is the essence of being the body of Christ.” (Henri Nouwen ‘Bread for the journey’1997.)*

*Caritas has given us an insight into the unequal distribution of the world’s resources at the expense of the poor. In our prayer this month, maybe this graphic can speak to our hearts as we reflect in prayer on the plight of the poor*



## November, 2017 World Day of the Poor – Part 2

When we reflect on the Sacred Scriptures, God’s preferential love for the poor is clearly evident in so many places. "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry" (Ex 22: 22-23)

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4: 18; cf. Is 61: 1-2).

Jesus in the Beatitudes identified with the vulnerable and reminds us that we will be judge on our works of mercy.

*"I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me  
I was naked and you gave me clothing,  
I was sick and you took care of me,  
I was in prison and you visited me."*

*..."As you did it to one of these, the least of my little ones, you did it to me" (Mt 25:31-46)*

Catherine McAuley had a clear vision of God’s love for the poor when she said:

*"God knows that I would rather be cold and hungry than the poor in Kingston  
(or Sydney, Melbourne, Cairns ,Perth, Wewak, Mount Hagen...)  
or elsewhere should be deprived of any consolation in our power to afford."  
(Letter to Teresa White November 1, 1838)*

Paul VI in [Populorum Progressio.(23) reminded us :“ As St. Ambrose put it: “You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor person , but you are giving them back what is theirs. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.”

Pope Francis in proclaiming the World Day of the Poor wrote: ‘Poverty is an interior attitude that avoids looking upon money, career and luxury as our goal in life and the condition for our happiness. Poverty instead creates the conditions for freely shouldering our personal and social responsibilities, despite our limitations, with trust in God’s closeness and the support of his grace. Poverty, understood in this way, is the yardstick that allows us to judge how best to use material goods and to build relationships that are neither selfish nor possessive.”

Pope Francis continued: “Let us not forget that the *Our Father* is the prayer of the poor. Our asking for bread expresses our entrustment to God for our basic needs in life. Everything that Jesus taught us in this prayer expresses and brings together the cry of all who suffer from life’s uncertainties and the lack of what they need”

During this month, let our response to these challenges be a reflective praying of the Our Father, from the perspective of the poor.