

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION  
OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

# LOVE NOT IN WORD BUT IN DEED

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR  
NOVEMBER 2017



SAN PAOLO

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION  
OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

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PASTORAL AID



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*Edited by Reverend Alessandro Amapani*



# WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2017

*Love not in word but in deed*

## Presentation

“We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of our occasional volunteer work or of impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people’s needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life” (Message for the First World Day of the Poor, n. 3). This quote from Pope Francis highlights his purpose for instituting the World Day of the Poor. The Church cannot be a passive spectator in the face of the drama of poverty, and Christians cannot content themselves with a sporadic and fragmented participation in order to quiet their consciences. The moment of taking action may be a sign of a true conversion that brings one to sharing. The key word for entering into this Message is truly that of sharing, which becomes a way of life. Pope Francis

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offered the paradigmatic example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who was not content to embrace the leper and give him alms, but understood that true charity consists in standing together, close to one another, considering the pain and suffering of the other's disease, as well as the distress of his marginalization. The culture of encounter leads to sharing, through which the other is no longer a stranger, but is perceived and treated as a brother or sister who needs me.

The Message for the World Day of the Poor centers around the motto and logo that seek to express, with simple and direct language, its profound content. The motto illuminates the logo and; vice-versa, the logo renders the teaching of the motto concrete and efficacious. "Love not in word but in deed": this phrase comes from the First Letter of Saint John, where it is the prelude to the culminating text that, for the first and only time reveals the very nature of God. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8), the Evangelist affirms, and this love was expressed in God's sending the Son to save humanity. This teaching calls to mind what John had already taught in his Gospel: "God so loved the world as to give his Son" (John 3:16). In this "giving" all of the love of the Father is expressed, who does not hold anything back for himself, but gives everything to the very end, without limit. This Word is the Son in his concrete existence who, above all, wanted to reveal his love for the poor, elevating them first to beatitude in his kingdom (Mt 5:3). God loves in this way: making his Word become action and life.

The logo expresses the double relationship that is established in an encounter with the poor person. He is at the door and holds out his hand to ask for help. Above the door, however, he finds another person who holds out his hand because he also is asking for help. There are two hands being held out: both help. One causes the other to go out, the other reaches out to give support. These two arms express solidarity and lead a person not to remain on the threshold of the door, but to go out to encounter the other. The poor person can enter into the house once the person inside the house has understood that help is sharing.

We present here this small booklet as a simple aid to priests and all volunteers who want to live these days more intensely in preparation for the World Day of the Poor. As Pope Francis suggested, prayer should be the foundation of this concrete effort to bring forth the Christian value of our solidarity. Charity, exercised by those who are committed to working against the multiform situations of poverty, will not be lacking the creative imagination that is proper to Christians, in order to better express attention, nearness, and sharing with the poor.

✠ Rino Fisichella

*President of the Pontifical Council  
for the Promotion of the New Evangelization*



## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE FIRST WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

*33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
19 November 2017*

Let us love, not with words but with deeds

**1.** “Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18). These words of the Apostle John voice an imperative that no Christian may disregard. The seriousness with which the “beloved disciple” hands down Jesus’ command to our own day is made even clearer by the contrast between the empty words so frequently on our lips and the concrete deeds against which we are called to measure ourselves. Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to take the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor. The Son of God’s way of loving is well-known, and John spells it out clearly. It stands on two pillars: God loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:10.19), and he loved us by giving completely of himself, even to laying down his life (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).

Such love cannot go unanswered. Even though offered unconditionally, asking nothing in return, it so sets hearts on fire that all

who experience it are led to love back, despite their limitations and sins. Yet this can only happen if we welcome God's grace, his merciful charity, as fully as possible into our hearts, so that our will and even our emotions are drawn to love both God and neighbor. In this way, the mercy that wells up – as it were – from the heart of the Trinity can shape our lives and bring forth compassion and works of mercy for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in need.

2. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him" (Ps 34:6). The Church has always understood the importance of this cry. We possess an outstanding testimony to this in the very first pages of the Acts of the Apostles, where Peter asks that seven men, "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (6:3), be chosen for the ministry of caring for the poor. This is certainly one of the first signs of the entrance of the Christian community upon the world's stage: the service of the poor. The earliest community realized that being a disciple of Jesus meant demonstrating fraternity and solidarity, in obedience to the Master's proclamation that the poor are blessed and heirs to the Kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3).

"They sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:45). In these words, we see clearly expressed the lively concern of the first Christians. The evangelist Luke, who more than any other speaks of mercy, does not exaggerate when he describes the practice of sharing in the early community. On the contrary, his words are addressed to believers in every generation, and thus also to us, in order to sustain our own witness and to encourage our care for those most in need. The same message is conveyed with similar conviction by the Apostle James. In his Letter, he spares no words: "Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you, and drag you into court?... What does it profit,

my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled', without giving them the things needed for the body; what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead' (2:5-6.14-17).

3. Yet there have been times when Christians have not fully heeded this appeal, and have assumed a worldly way of thinking. Yet the Holy Spirit has not failed to call them to keep their gaze fixed on what is essential. He has raised up men and women who, in a variety of ways, have devoted their lives to the service of the poor. Over these two thousand years, how many pages of history have been written by Christians who, in utter simplicity and humility, and with generous and creative charity, have served their poorest brothers and sisters!

The most outstanding example is that of Francis of Assisi, followed by many other holy men and women over the centuries. He was not satisfied to embrace lepers and give them alms, but chose to go to Gubbio to stay with them. He saw this meeting as the turning point of his conversion: "When I was in my sins, it seemed a thing too bitter to look on lepers, and the Lord himself led me among them and I showed



them mercy. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of mind and body” (Text 1-3: FF 110). This testimony shows the transformative power of charity and the Christian way of life.

We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of our occasional volunteer work, or of impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people’s needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life. Our prayer and our journey of discipleship and conversion find the confirmation of their evangelic authenticity in precisely such charity and sharing. This way of life gives rise to joy and peace of soul, because we touch with our own hands the flesh of Christ. If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. 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. Saint John Chrysostom’s admonition remains ever timely: “If you want to honor the body of Christ, do not scorn it when it is naked; do not honor the Eucharistic Christ with silk vestments, and then, leaving the church, neglect the other Christ suffering from cold and nakedness” (Hom. in Matthaum, 50.3: PG 58).

We are called, then, to draw near to the poor, to encounter them, to meet their gaze, to embrace them and to let them feel the warmth of love that breaks through their solitude. Their outstretched hand is also an invitation to step out of our certainties and comforts, and to acknowledge the value of poverty in itself.

**4.** Let us never forget that, for Christ’s disciples, poverty is above all a call to follow Jesus in his own poverty. It means walking be-

hind him and beside him, a journey that leads to the beatitude of the Kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20). Poverty means having a humble heart that accepts our creaturely limitations and sinfulness and thus enables us to overcome the temptation to feel omnipotent and immortal. 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 (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nos. 25-45).

Let us, then, take as our example Saint Francis and his witness of authentic poverty. Precisely because he kept his gaze fixed on Christ, Francis was able to see and serve him in the poor. If we want to help change history and promote real development, we need to hear the cry of the poor and commit ourselves to ending their marginalization. At the same time, I ask the poor in our cities and our communities not to lose the sense of evangelical poverty that is part of their daily life.

**5.** 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!

Tragically, in our own time, even as ostentatious wealth accumulates in the hands of the privileged few, often in connection with illegal activities and the appalling exploitation of human dignity, there is a scandalous growth of poverty in broad sectors of society throughout our world. Faced with this scenario, we cannot remain passive, much less resigned. There is a poverty that stifles the spirit of initiative of so many young people by keeping them from finding work. There is a poverty that dulls the sense of personal responsibility and leaves others to do the work while we go looking for favors. There is a poverty that poisons the wells of participation and allows little room for professionalism; in this way it demeans the merit of those who do work and are productive. To all these forms of poverty we must respond with a new vision of life and society.

All the poor – as Blessed Paul VI loved to say – belong to the Church by “evangelical right” (Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 29 September 1963), and require of us a fundamental option on their behalf. Blessed, therefore, are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes”: they are hands that call down God’s blessing upon their brothers and sisters.

6. 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. To the World Days instituted by my Predecessors, which are already a tradition in the life of our communities, I wish to add this one, which adds to them an exquisitely evangelical fullness, that is, Jesus’ preferential love for the poor.

I invite the whole Church, and men and women of good will everywhere, to turn their gaze on this day to all those who stretch out their hands and plead for our help and solidarity. They are our brothers and sisters, created and loved by the one Heavenly Father. 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. God created the heavens and the earth for all; yet sadly some have erected barriers, walls and fences, betraying the original gift meant for all humanity, with none excluded.

7. It is my wish that, in the week preceding the World Day of the Poor, which falls this year on 19 November, the Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time, Christian communities will make every effort to create moments of encounter and friendship, solidarity



and concrete assistance. They can invite the poor and volunteers to take part together in the Eucharist on this Sunday, in such a way that there be an even more authentic celebration of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on the following Sunday. The kingship of Christ is most evident on Golgotha, when the Innocent One, nailed to the cross, poor, naked and stripped of everything, incarnates and reveals the fullness of God's love. Jesus' complete abandonment to the Father expresses his utter poverty and reveals the power of the Love that awakens him to new life on the day of the Resurrection.

This Sunday, if there are poor people where we live who seek protection and assistance, let us draw close to them: it will be a favorable moment to encounter the God we seek. Following the teaching of Scripture (cf. Gen 18:3-5; Heb 13:2), let us welcome them as honored guests at our table; they can be teachers who help us live the faith more consistently. With their trust and readiness to receive help, they show us in a quiet and often joyful way, how essential it is to live simply and to abandon ourselves to God's providence.

8. At the heart of all the many concrete initiatives carried out on this day should always be prayer. 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. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters. The Our Father is a prayer said in the plural: the bread for which we ask is "ours", and that entails sharing, participation and joint responsibility. In this prayer, all of us recognize our need to overcome every form of selfishness, in order to enter into the joy of mutual acceptance.

9. I ask my brother Bishops, and all priests and deacons who by their vocation have the mission of supporting the poor, together with all consecrated persons and all associations, movements and volunteers everywhere, to help make this World Day of the Poor a tradition that concretely contributes to evangelization in today's world.

This new World Day, therefore, should become a powerful appeal to our consciences as believers, allowing us to grow in the conviction that sharing with the poor enables us to understand the deepest truth of the Gospel. The poor are not a problem: they are a resource from which to draw as we strive to accept and practise in our lives the essence of the Gospel.

Francis

*From the Vatican, 13 June 2017  
Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua*

*Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
on the occasion of the Eucharistic Celebration  
for the Jubilee for those Socially Excluded

*St. Peter's Basilica – Sunday, 13 November 2016*

“For you... the sun of justice shall rise, with healing in its wings” (Mal 4:2). The words of the Prophet Malachi, which we heard in the first reading, shed light on today’s Jubilee. They come to us from the last page of the last Old Testament prophet. They are words directed to those who trust in the Lord, who place their hope in him, who see in him life’s greatest good and refuse to live only for themselves and their own interests. For those who are materially poor but rich in God, the sun of justice will rise. These are the poor in spirit, to whom Jesus promised the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3) and whom God, through the words of the Prophet Malachi, calls “my special possession” (Mal 3:17). The prophet contrasts them with the proud, those who seek a secure life in their self-sufficiency and their earthly possessions. This last page of the Old Testament raises chal-

lenging questions about the ultimate meaning of life: where do I look for security? In the Lord or in other forms of security not pleasing to God? Where is my life headed, what does my heart long for? The Lord of life or ephemeral things that cannot satisfy?

Similar questions appear in today’s Gospel. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the last and most important page of his earthly life: his death and resurrection. He is in the precincts of the Temple, “adorned with noble stones and offerings” (Lk 21:5). People were speaking of the beautiful exterior of the temple, when Jesus says: “The days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another” (v. 6). He adds that there will be no lack of conflicts, famine, convulsions on earth and in the heavens. Jesus does not want to frighten us, but to tell us that everything we now see will inevitably pass away. Even the strongest kingdoms, the most sacred buildings and the surest realities of this world do not last for ever; sooner or later they fall.

In response, people immediately put two questions to the Master: “When will this be, and what will be the sign?” (v. 7). When and what... We are constantly driven by curiosity: we want to know when and we want to see signs. Yet Jesus does not care for such curiosity. On the contrary, he exhorts us not to be taken in by apocalyptic preachers. Those who follow Jesus pay no heed to prophets of doom, the nonsense of horoscopes, or terrifying sermons and predictions that distract from the truly important things. Amid the din of so many voices, the Lord asks us to distinguish between what is from him and what is from the false spirit. This is important: to distinguish the word of wisdom that the God speaks to us each day from the shouting of those who seek in God’s name to frighten, to nourish division and fear.

Jesus firmly tells us not to be afraid of the upheavals in every period of history, not even in the face of the most serious trials and injustices that may befall his disciples. He asks us to persevere in the good and to place all our trust in God, who does not disappoint: “Not a hair of your head will perish” (v. 18). God does not forget his faithful ones, his precious possession. He does not forget us.

Today, however, he questions us about the meaning of our lives. Using an image, we could say that these readings serve as a “strainer” through which our life can be poured: they remind us that almost everything in this world is passing away, like running water. But there are treasured realities that remain, like a precious stone in a strainer. What endures, what has value in life, what riches do not disappear? Surely these two: the Lord and our neighbor. These two riches do not disappear! These are the greatest goods; these are to be loved. Everything else – the heavens, the earth, all that is most beautiful, even this Basilica – will pass away; but we must never exclude God or others from our lives.

Today, though, when we speak of exclusion, we immediately think of concrete people, not useless objects but precious persons. The human person, set by God at the pinnacle of creation, is often discarded, set aside in favor of ephemeral things. This is unacceptable, because in God’s eyes man is the most precious good. It is ominous that we are growing used to this rejection. We should be worried when our consciences are anaesthetized and we no longer see the brother or sister suffering at our side, or notice the grave problems in our world, which become a mere refrain familiar from the headlines on the evening news.

Dear brothers and sisters, today is your Jubilee. Your presence here helps us to be attuned to God’s wavelength, to see what he sees. He sees not only appearances (cf. 1 Sam 16:7), but turns his gaze to the “humble and contrite in spirit” (Is 66:2), to the many poor Lazaruses of our day. What harm we do to ourselves when we fail to notice Lazarus, excluded and cast out (cf. Lk 16:19-21)! It is turning away from God himself. It is the symptom of a spiritual sclerosis when we are only interested in objects to be produced rather than on persons to be loved. This is the origin of the tragic contradiction of our age: as progress and new possibilities increase, which is a good thing, less and less people are able to benefit from them. This is a great injustice that should concern us much more than knowing when or how the world will end. Because we can-

not go about our business quietly at home while Lazarus lies at the door. There is no peace in the homes of the prosperous as long as justice is lacking in the home of everyone.

Today, in the cathedrals and sanctuaries throughout the world, the Doors of Mercy are being closed. Let us ask for the grace not to close our eyes to God who sees us and to our neighbor who asks something of us. Let us open our eyes to God, purifying the eye of our hearts of deceitful and fearful images, from the God of power and retribution, the projection of human pride and fear. Let us look with trust to the God of mercy, with the certainty that “love never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). Let us renew our hope in the true life to which we are called, the life that will not pass away and that awaits us in communion with the Lord and with others, in a joy that will last forever, without end.

And let us open our eyes to our neighbor, especially to our brothers and sisters who are forgotten and excluded, to the “Lazarus” at our door. That is where the Church’s magnifying glass is pointed. May the Lord free us from turning it towards ourselves. May he turn us away from the trappings that distract us, from interests and privileges, from attachment to power and glory, from being seduced by the spirit of the world. Our Mother the Church looks “in particular to that portion of humanity that is suffering and crying out, because she knows that these people belong to her by evangelical right” (PAUL VI, Address at the beginning of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council, 29 September 1963). By right but also by evangelical duty, for it is our responsibility to care for the true riches which are the poor. In the light of these reflections, I would like today to be the “day of the poor”. We are reminded of this by an ancient tradition according to which the Roman martyr Lawrence, before suffering a cruel martyrdom for the love of the Lord, distributed the goods of the community to the poor, whom he described as the true treasure of the Church. May the Lord grant that we may look without fear to what truly matters, and turn our hearts to our true treasure.



FIRST PROPOSAL FOR LECTIO DIVINA

## FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

THE WORD... IS HEARD

“Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court? [...] What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead”.

(Jas 2:5-6,14-17)

...IS MEDITATED UPON

The appeal of the Apostle Paul regarding faith, according to which ‘to believe’ means to adhere to Jesus, to the power of his resurrection, in communion with his sufferings for a complete conformity to him (cfr. Phil 3:10-11), leads us to think that to profess the faith is a relationship. Faith is a relationship with Jesus: a state of discipleship that demands openness, docility and discernment of his gospel. It is the task of the disciple, therefore, to go back to this announcement in his or her own life, and to understand how he or she puts it into

practice on the basis of the Master's teaching. It is necessary to look at Him, to fix one's eyes on Jesus, "the leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2). From this relationship, one arrives at a particularly significant fact: Jesus, when he announces the coming of the Kingdom of God (cfr. Mk 1:14-15), calls attention to the centrality of poverty.

After having received the anointing of the word of God (cfr. Lk 4:16-30), he shows tenderness and benevolence to everyone, but most especially toward those who live in conditions of marginalization and poverty: those whom he defines as the small ones of His Kingdom. This leads us to understand that attention to the poor is, in Jesus' teaching, an evident predilection in keeping with Biblical revelation. It is enough to recall the way in which God takes care of his people who are humiliated and oppressed (cfr. Dt 27:7) and of the many exhortations of charity for the needy (cfr. Ps 82:1-8; Prov 3:28; Sir 4:1-10; Is 58:7.9-10), to realize that solidarity constitutes an important aspect of giving witness to faith. God's concern for the poor, as a good and merciful Father, along with their being numbered among his favorite friends, makes us understand that this should become a priority in the life of a disciple in relation to God: to be similar to God by making fundamental choices like his, choices revealed by the Master's style of welcoming and confirmed by his explicit instruction: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). This phrase reveals a precise choice by God, which is to show the greatest solicitude for

the poor. Those who believe in him cannot avoid this choice. In reality, such attention verifies whether one's adherence to God is authentic. One cannot believe in him without having assimilated this criterion, which is fundamental to the Christian message.

According to James 2:5, God makes this preferential choice, proposing a surprising way to save humanity: "God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something" (1Cor 1:27-28). The foolishness of this proclamation, which is a stumbling stone, resides exactly in the priority it gives to welcoming the poor, passing on this type of openness so that it become the lifestyle of believers. In the work of taking care of those who are in need, it is necessary to get involved emotionally, according to that willingness to become vulnerable seen in Jesus, who freely accepted becoming similar to our sinful flesh (cfr. Rom 8:3), that is, to the human condition of weakness and misery. Solidarity, without this modality of involvement, is purely a hand-out. Even though it is useful to do good, always helping a person in need; nevertheless, it is necessary to practice the same willingness to be vulnerable that Jesus had, in light of God's special choice of the poor. Such attention requires a radical choice: to make room for the other in one's own life. Charity, urged on by a relationship with Jesus, is a testimony about the way in which God saved humanity (cfr. 2 Cor 5:21). The generation of good, in fact, passes through a simple and free act, which is seen since the beginning of creation: God draws back to make space for man. Even the incarnation of the Word can be understood in this light. Jesus comes close to the poor and all those who are in need, showing that solidarity means above all giving space to the other: "They brought him many who were possessed by demons, and he drove out the spirits by a word and cured all the sick, to fulfill what had been said by Isaiah the prophet: 'He took away our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Mt 8:16-17). Sharing is not only about giving a part of something,



whether superfluous or not, to a person who lacks it, but the generous will to draw back yourself in order to make space for the other, that is, to permit the other to find a way to begin again, ransoming the person from his or her marginalization. This choice by God, which enters into His redemptive plan, establishes the poor among those he privileges: “Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?” (Jas 2:5). We are dealing here with a very particular preference that has its foundation in the faith of the poor, to the point that they are designated among those who will inherit the promises of the Kingdom (cfr. Rm 8: 16-17, 28-29). What is meant by the “faith of the poor”? The expression seems to point to the typical attitude of those who invoke God when they are in need. It is an attitude that springs above all from their state of destitution that forces them to ask for alms, to rely on some other person for their own subsistence. It is clear that such dependence is above all directed to God, who is “the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work” (Phil 2:13). In their misery, the poor can do nothing else than entrust themselves to God. It is an unavoidable condition for their survival.

Another and even more original attitude follows upon this first one. It is glimpsed in the use of a verbal action, coherently transmitted by the evangelical tradition. We are referring to the verb “to evangelize” (*euaggelízesthai*), which in Greek has a reflexive value. The expression, “the poor have the good news proclaimed to them” (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22), lets us understand the privilege found in being in the margins: the poor, in fact, are the custodians of the power of the Gospel (cf. Rm 1:16). Therefore, God chose, in his plan of salvation, to be encountered in the poor, whose existence is a temple for his glorification: a dwelling made holy from which emerge the wonders of his closeness (1 Pet 2:9). The poor, with their faith, become a place of encountering God and learning to believe in him. There is a way in which the choice of the poor becomes a legacy of the testimony of disciples: listening to the word of God. The ex-

PLICIT admonition of James 2:5, “Listen”, has the force of a universal imperative, clearly motivated by a grave lack its fulfilment: “But instead you dishonor the poor person!” (v. 6). For the author, ignoring the needs of the poor, namely, their daily nourishment (cfr. v. 15) and the staples of survival (cfr. v. 16), stands out as an indication that the Christian’s choice of God is at serious risk of being compromised. It is not possible to confess faith in God without recognizing him in the one who keeps him in the truth of revelation. This is clearly expressed by the use of the Greek verb *atimázein* (to dishonor, despise), whose meaning implies that dishonor for a poor person is the same thing as dishonor shown to God (cfr. Rev 5:13).

Listening to the word of God, therefore, allows a transposition to take place: respect for the poor, through gestures of nearness and support in their destitution, is adoration of God in his magnificence. The author repeats this point strongly: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (Jas 1:27). We find here an aspect that is made perfectly clear: the faith of a disciple, which is manifested in the cult of worship given to God (*thrēskeía* = cult, adoration), is maintained in its purity according to the measure in which the disciple takes care of the needs of the poor. Such attention, however, requires a substantial nourishment: that of the perfect law that establishes the disciple in the condition of readiness to act with the freedom of the gospel (cfr. 1:25), that is, in that state of liberation from prejudices that favors an attitude of solidarity without conditions. The word of God, truly assimilated, purifies the perceptions of disciples, making them similar to Jesus, whose affections are extended to making others happy by the donation of his own life (cfr. Phil 2:1-5). The confession of faith, therefore, manifests itself in the concrete practice of works: a harmonious cooperation that confirms the truth of the choice that the disciple makes for God. The Greek term *érgon* (work), in the plural, implies a double sense: the desire to re-launch the existence of the one who is poor; and the courage to revisit one’s own existence,

pursuing the ideal of a life that is precisely, in its essence, lived according to the Gospel (cfr. Mt 10:9; Lk 9:57-62). It is the repeated call to poverty in witness to the faith. Solidarity, which responds to the principle according to which God chose the poor in the sight of all the world as his friends, requires rethinking how one ought to conduct one's own life. It is not possible for a disciple to share the poverty of others without aiming at a more simple life himself or herself. Saint Basil of Caesarea indicated this in one of his works, *De avaritia*, Hom. VI,7: "The goods that you received to distribute among everyone, you hoarded for yourself. When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor. Thus it is that you commit injustice to as many of the poor as you could have helped but did not".

A passage in *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 189, echoes this warning, teaching that solidarity is the essential criterion for reaching the common good: "The private ownership of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them, so that they can better serve the common good; for this reason, solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them". This is a new mode, expressly evangelical, of conceptualizing one's relationship to the poor. Attention to them, which has its origin in love of God (cfr. 1 Jn 4:19), requires a change of lifestyle that affects the possession of goods. When one reads in James 2:17 that faith without works is dead, in parallel perhaps with Galatians 5:6: "faith working through love", the implicit value of a simple lifestyle in relation to the poor is being affirmed. Only the person who aims at essentiality can understand the poor affectively, within the consciousness that charity means renouncing something of one's own that belongs, to tell the truth, to all those who live in misery caused by the stinginess of a humanity turned in on itself.

## ...IS PRAYED

Give thanks to the LORD for he is good,  
his mercy endures forever!

Some had lost their way in a barren desert;  
found no path toward a city to live in.  
They were hungry and thirsty;  
their life was ebbing away.

In their distress they cried to the LORD,  
who rescued them in their peril,  
Guided them by a direct path  
so they reached a city to live in.

Let them thank the LORD for his mercy,  
such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam.  
For he satisfied the thirsty,  
filled the hungry with good things.

In their distress they cried to the LORD,  
who saved them in their peril;  
He brought them forth from darkness and the shadow of death  
and broke their chains asunder.

Let them thank the LORD for his mercy,  
such wondrous deeds for the children of Adam  
And settled the hungry there;  
they built a city to live in.

They sowed fields and planted vineyards,  
brought in an abundant harvest.  
God blessed them, and they increased greatly,  
and their livestock did not decrease.

While he released the poor man from affliction,  
and increased their families like flocks.  
Whoever is wise will take note of these things,  
and ponder the merciful deeds of the LORD.  
*(cfr. Psalms 106, 107)*

## SECOND PROPOSAL FOR LECTIO DIVINA

# LOVE NOT IN WORD BUT IN DEED

## THE WORD... IS HEARD

“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him. The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (Now) this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if (our) hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.”

**(1 Jn 3:14-24)**

## ...IS MEDITATED UPON

As Pope Francis reminds us, it is the “Beloved Disciple” who passed on to us this command: “Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth” (1 Jn 3:18). It is he who, more than any of the other apostles, was struck profoundly by Jesus’ invitation to love as he HAS loved us. The patristic tradition holds that John, up to the moment of his death, used to repeat all the time in Ephesus, almost like a lullaby, the same words of Jesus: “Love one another”.

John did not “invent” his own version of Jesus, but was faithful in the deepest way to his teacher and Lord. The Gospel of John is perhaps even more faithful to the historical Jesus than the synoptics, not only for its precise knowledge of places, times, and persons, but even more so for its penetration into the heart of Jesus. For Jesus, it is the heart that counts, that heart that cannot keep from manifesting itself in words and deeds. When the Letter of John reaches the point of synthesizing the entire mystery of the faith in the words, “God is love”, it shows how full a comprehension of God was given to us in the encounter with Jesus. In the final analysis, for John there exist only two virtues and two sins. The first virtue is to believe in Jesus, and the second is to love your brothers and sisters; while the two sins are radically opposed to these: to refuse Jesus as the Son of the Father and to hate others.

With this, everything has been said. This is why verse 3:18 also repeats it, calling us “little children”. John calls all “little children”. He is aware of his paternity: he is the one who, in announcing the Gospel of Jesus, has generated his disciples to a new life in the Spirit – in his letter the term “little children” includes both fathers and sons, both the old and the young.

The paternity of the evangelist depends, in turn, on an even greater paternity, that of the Father who gave his own Son, and in him has made everyone sons and daughters. John wants to share with us the joy of having encountered the love of God, of having placed his head on Jesus’ breast: without this sharing his joy would

not be full. The term “little children” is complemented by the term “brothers”. We are children of the Father, and therefore we should love one another as brothers and sisters. It is worth the effort to remember that it is precisely the home that is the first school where parents teach their children through a charity lived not in words but with deeds. By living together, sharing space and time, knowing how to partake in moments of celebration together, as well as those moments of sickness, siblings learn how to grow together.

For this reason, for John the two virtues and the two sins are correlative, because every true relationship with God implies love for one’s brothers and sisters; and every true love for a brother or sister points to the God who made and loves him or her. Not to take care of one’s brothers and sisters, not to feed them or give them something to drink, not to protect their dignity, not to help them to progress through education and schooling, or even more, to hate one’s brothers and sisters, would mean not to be believers in the true God. Whoever denigrates a human being and does not serve him or her, in the end, holds that God is not the Creator, and this his pardon is not capable of saving. Whoever denigrates the creature also denigrates the Creator who wants the creature.

But the converse is also true: every time that we draw near to a human creature, we desire not only that he or she survive on this earth, but also that he or she have joy, have life, find God, and gain eternal life. Only the person who does not love is not interested in God. Whoever loves his brother or sister desires that he or she be able to overcome death. Epicurius was greatly mistaken when he said that death was not a problem. In reality, for someone who loves, the problem is not one’s own death, but that of the other; it is the desire that the friend, the brother, the loved one, the poor person may live.

For this reason, John does not intend to set the preaching of the Gospel against love when he contrasts “words” with “deeds and truth”. Above all, the expression “to love with words and speech” indicates the deception of those who speak lying words that do not

have any reflection in life. “To love in deed and in truth” instead, requires that both our actions and our words be an expression of that love that leads us to see in our brother or sister someone loved by God, someone who is a child of God, someone on whom dignity and goodness has been bestowed.

In particular, the Evangelist reminds us of those personal encounters in which Jesus manifested his love. From the newlyweds at the wedding feast at Cana to the Samaritan woman, from the man born blind to Lazarus, from the man at the pool by the Sheep Gate to John himself who leaned his head on Jesus’ breast at the Last Supper, Jesus always stopped to encounter every man and woman personally, everyone who was poor in body and spirit.

Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* that precisely this personal attention, this desire for encounter, this heart to heart, radically differentiates every ideological interpretation of poverty from Christian charity. The human person is important in the eyes of Jesus and of his disciples, beyond the calculation of what the person might be able to do for them. A dying man, for whom one cannot anticipate a return to health in any way, nevertheless remains a brother, with whom to share the last moments of life. The Day of the Poor invites us to this type of encounter, to pause at the same table, to share the bread of this earth and that of heaven.

“Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.”

## ...IS PRAYED

“Does charity suffice? Is love sufficient to lift up the world? To conquer the innumerable and various difficulties that oppose the transformative and regenerative development of society, which history, ethnography, economy, politics, and the organization of public life present us at this time? In the face of the modern myth of temporal efficacy, are we really sure that charity is not an illusion, that it is not alienation?”

“We must respond both yes and no. Yes, charity is necessary and sufficient as the moving force behind the great innovative phenomenon in the defective world in which we live. No, charity is not enough, if it remains purely theory, a matter of words and sentiment (cfr. Mt 7:21), and if it is not followed by the other virtues, above all by justice, which is the minimum measure of charity, and by other coefficients that make the action inspired and sustained by charity itself practical, operative, and concrete, in the different specific areas of temporal human affairs”.

*(From the Homily of Pope Paul VI during his apostolic pilgrimage to Bogotà, for the “Day of Progress”, 23 August 1968)*

“But it is clear that not all can work up sweat in the quest for knowledge. Therefore, Christ gave an abridged law that could be known by everyone, and no one can be excused from observing it because of ignorance. And this is the law of divine love. . . . For without charity all other things are insufficient. . . . One should note that only a difference in charity leads to a difference in beatitude, but not a difference in any other virtue. For many people were more abstemious than the Apostles, but the Apostles exceed all others in beatitude because of the excellence of their charity.”

*(Saint Thomas Aquinas, The Ten Commandments, Prologue)*

“Charity is the soul of faith, which makes it alive; without love, faith dies.”

*(Saint Anthony of Padua, Sermones Dominicales et Festivi II)*

“Since my longing for martyrdom was powerful and unsettling, I turned to the epistles of St. Paul in the hope of finally finding an answer. By chance the 12th and 13th chapters of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians caught my attention, and in the first section I read that not everyone can be an apostle, prophet or teacher, that the Church is composed of a variety of members, and that the eye can-

not be the hand. Even with such an answer revealed before me, I was not satisfied and did not find peace.

“I persevered in the reading and did not let my mind wander until I found this encouraging theme: ‘Set your desires on the greater gifts. And I will show you the way which surpasses all others.’ For the Apostle insists that the greater gifts are nothing at all without love and that this same love is surely the best path leading directly to God. At length I had found peace of mind.

“When I had looked upon the mystical body of the Church, I recognized myself in none of the members which St. Paul described, and what is more, I desired to distinguish myself more favorably within the whole body. Love appeared to me to be the hinge for my vocation. Indeed I knew that the Church had a body composed of various members, but in this body the necessary and more noble member was not lacking; I knew that the Church had a heart and that such a heart appeared to be aflame with love. I knew that one love drove the members of the Church to action, that if this love were extinguished, the apostles would have proclaimed the Gospel no longer, the martyrs would have shed their blood no more. I saw and realized that love sets off the bounds of all vocations, that love is everything, that this same love embraces every time and every place. In one word, that love is everlasting.

“Then, nearly ecstatic with the supreme joy in my soul, I proclaimed: O Jesus, my love, at last I have found my calling: my call is love. Certainly I have found my place in the Church, and you gave me that very place, my God. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love, and thus I will be all things, as my desire finds its direction”.

*(From the Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus)*

## THIRD PROPOSAL FOR LECTIO DIVINA

# THIS POOR ONE CRIED OUT AND THE LORD HEARD

## THE WORD... IS HEARD

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be always in my mouth.  
My soul will glory in the LORD;  
let the poor hear and be glad.

Magnify the LORD with me;  
and let us exalt his name together.  
I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
delivered me from all my fears.

Look to him and be radiant,  
and your faces may not blush for shame.  
This poor one cried out and the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.

The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and he saves them.  
Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him.

(From Psalm 33)

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him. As they were going out, they met a Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of the Skull), they gave Jesus wine to drink mixed with gall. But when he had tasted it, he refused to drink. After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, [and] come down from the cross!” Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way. From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah. Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.” But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.”

(Mt 27:27-50)



## ...IS MEDITATED UPON

Jesus accepted being stripped more than once: first in the praetorium by the soldiers during his trial, and then before being crucified. Jesus is naked like the poorest person on earth. He is stripped of everything because he is the Poor One par excellence, without any rights. For the Apostle Paul, the poverty of Christ becomes the model of Christian poverty: “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). Starting with this attitude of welcoming the greatest poverty, which the Son of God demonstrated, we can contemplate with humility and sincerity Christ, the King and Lord of history. Pope Francis writes in his Message for the First World Day of the Poor, in paragraph 7, “The kingship of Christ is most evident on Golgotha, when the Innocent One, nailed to the cross, poor, naked and stripped of everything, incarnates and reveals the fullness of God’s love. Jesus’ complete abandonment to the Father expresses his utter poverty and reveals the power of the Love that awakens him to new life on the day of the Resurrection”. The Paschal mystery represents the revelatory fulfilment of the love and preference the Father has for the poor. If the death of the Son on the Cross shows the culmination of his solidarity with the least important, the resurrection unequivocally proves the Father’s approval of the Son’s offering and of His unconditional obedience. In the Gospel of John, this sacrificial obedience of the Son to the Father for the salvation of humankind is expressed with these words: “...Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1).

Jesus’ death on the cross as a poor person demonstrates that divine love finds a way to be in union with every poor person on the earth. Since God loves every man and woman, just as they are, in their real conditions, he became poor for us, to make us rich out of his poverty. The Saint and Bishop Augustine said: “What man

knows all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ, concealed in the poverty of his flesh? Scripture says: Although he was rich, he became poor for our sake to enrich us by his poverty. He showed himself poor when he assumed our mortal nature and destroyed death, yet he promised us riches, for he had not been robbed of his wealth but was keeping it in reserve. How great are the blessings of his goodness which he reserves for those who fear him and shows to those who hope in him! Until he gives them to us in their plenitude, we can have only the faintest conception of them; but to enable us to receive these blessings, he who in his divine nature is the equal of the Father assumed the condition of a slave and became like us, and so restored to us our likeness to God. The only Son of God became a son of man to make many men sons of God. He instructed slaves by showing himself in the form of a slave, and now he enables free men to see him in the form of God” (Sermo 194, 3-4).

Jesus Himself, absurdly, becomes poor, in solidarity with the poor, and in this way invites all those who believe in Him to become poor and stand by the side of the poor. Christ’s preferential choice, in his poverty and nudity on the Cross, redefines in this sense and in this way the image of God and the image of man, not only because it puts God on the side of the poor, but also because it signals the definitive understanding of who God is. Pope Francis writes in the first paragraph of his Message for The First World Day of The Poor: “Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to take the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor. The Son of God’s way of loving is well-known...It stands on two pillars: God loved us first ... and he loved us by giving completely of himself, even to laying down his life...In this way, the mercy that wells up – as it were – from the heart of the Trinity can shape our lives and bring forth compassion and works of mercy for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in need”.

In the cry of Jesus on the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” we discover that the poverty of Christ expresses the greatest coherent form of fidelity to the will of the Father; poverty that became obedience out of love, to the very end, and obedience that expresses fully the oblation of the Son for the salvation of humanity. The Church contemplates this journey of abasement made by the Son of God in the highest “place” of Christian life, namely in the Liturgy, when the Christian community prays “On the Cross (Jesus) lowered himself even to the extreme poverty of the human condition, and you, Father, revealed a love unknown to our eyes, a love ready to give itself without asking anything in return” (Rite of Matrimony, Nuptial Blessing IV). But the cry of the Messiah on the Cross also expresses the revelation that for the disciple becomes a way of understanding the source of Jesus’ solidarity with the poor, which flows from his unique experience of the paternity of God.

This is an experience of the paternity of God that tends to initiate among human beings a liberation from discrimination, insofar as every person has God as Father, and therefore, every human being is a brother or sister to the others. Jesus’ style of poverty and the evangelization of the poor are the two pulsing heartbeats that are found at the heart of the Gospel; they express the way of life chosen by the Master, which his disciples should make their reference point if they are to be integral and faithful followers. Moreover, the poverty which the disciples are called to live, and to which they are called to pay attention to expresses, just as in Jesus’ case, a new way of being in relationship with God the Father that Jesus expressed with his words, choices, and actions. It is a poverty that reflects the change of life and relationships with possessions and with others that the arrival of the Kingdom provokes in history. At the beginning and as the foundation of the Beatitudes Jesus exhorts: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of heaven is theirs”. Pope Francis writes in Message for the First World Day

of the Poor, in no. 4: “Let us never forget that, for Christ’s disciples, poverty is above all a call to follow Jesus in his own poverty. It means walking behind him and beside him, a journey that leads to the beatitude of the Kingdom of heaven... Poverty means having a humble heart that accepts our creaturely limitations and sinfulness and thus enables us to overcome the temptation to feel omnipotent and immortal. 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...”. Already in the Old Testament, in the Book of Deuteronomy, to be precise, there had been given to the believing Hebrew an instruction, at the same time existential and moral: “There will no longer be a poor man among you” (15:4). The following words from the Book of Acts echo the same message: “As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were all filled with the holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need” (4:31-35). In this passage, the situation which precedes and gives rise to the choice of the community to share their goods is the prayer of the primitive Christian community, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the testimony of the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus. The power of such a sharing of goods and a life lived in such a radical way truly seems to be, according to the text, the consequence of an encounter with the real presence of the risen Christ in the community, a presence so strong and decisive that nothing seems impos-

sible. Their faith and the encounter with the risen Christ open the hearts of the disciples to sharing their goods in the way necessary, so that none of them be left in need (cfr. Acts 4:34). It is from this font of encounter with the One who is the First and the Last and the Living One (cfr. Rev 1:18) “that in every epoch and context of the Church women and men have been born who offered their lives at the service of the poor, drawing near to them, encountering them, looking them in the eyes, embracing them”: these words from Pope Francis almost ask believers to confirm them as if they were an examination of conscience and a criterion for verifying one’s own walk of faith, along with that of the Christian community. In this way attention to the poor and action on their behalf are not simply an ideal to be desired, but they become concrete attitudes and ways of being attentive in believers, who in this way continue on the well-worn path traced out by the tradition of the Church which, from the beginning of its existence, has put care for the poor among its primary concerns. In this sense, the promise of the Word of God found in the Psalms is fulfilled: “This poor one cried out and the LORD heard” (Ps 34:7); and just as the Father heard the cry of the Son when he was poor and naked on the Cross, so he continues to hear the cry of every poor person on the earth through the community of believers that, in every time, open their ears to the cry of the poor. They hear the poor person, welcome him or her, and care for him or her like the Good Samaritans of the world. Saint Augustine, a bishop, comments: “Actually, you are not heard because you are rich. If perhaps you cried and you were not listened to, hear the reason why: This poor one cried and the LORD heard. Make the cry of misery sound out and the Lord will hear you. And how do you do this? Even if you possess something, do not presume for this reason on your own strength; be mindful that you are unhappy, be mindful that you are a poor person until you possess the One who makes you rich...”

*(Exposition on the Psalms 33/2,11).*

## ...IS PRAYED

LORD, hear my prayer;  
let my cry come to you.  
Do not hide your face from me  
in the day of my distress.

Turn your ear to me;  
when I call, answer me quickly.  
For my days vanish like smoke;  
my bones burn away as in a furnace.  
My heart is withered, dried up like grass,  
too wasted to eat my food.  
From my loud groaning  
I become just skin and bones.  
I am like a desert owl,  
like an owl among the ruins.

I lie awake and moan,  
like a lone sparrow on the roof.  
All day long my enemies taunt me;  
in their rage, they make my name a curse.  
I eat ashes like bread,  
mingle my drink with tears.  
Because of your furious wrath,  
you lifted me up just to cast me down.

My days are like a lengthening shadow;  
I wither like the grass.  
But you, LORD, are enthroned forever;  
your renown is for all generations.  
You will again show mercy to Zion;  
now is the time for pity;  
the appointed time has come.

Its stones are dear to your servants;  
 its dust moves them to pity.  
 The nations shall fear your name, LORD,  
 all the kings of the earth, your glory,  
 Once the LORD has rebuilt Zion  
 and appeared in glory,  
 Heeding the plea of the lowly,  
 not scorning their prayer.  
 Let this be written for the next generation,  
 for a people not yet born,  
 that they may praise the LORD:

The LORD looked down from the holy heights,  
 viewed the earth from heaven,  
 To attend to the groaning of the prisoners,  
 to release those doomed to die.  
 Then the LORD's name will be declared on Zion,  
 his praise in Jerusalem,  
 When peoples and kingdoms gather  
 to serve the LORD.

*(From Psalm 102)*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
 My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour  
 For He has looked with favour on His lowly servant.  
 From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
 The Almighty has done great things for me,  
 And holy is His Name.  
 He has mercy on those who fear Him  
 In every generation.  
 He has shown the strength of His arm,  
 He has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
 And has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
 And the rich He has sent away empty.  
 He has come to the help of His servant Israel  
 For He has remembered His promise of mercy,  
 The promise He made to our fathers,  
 To Abraham and his children for ever.  
*(Lk 1:46-51)*

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
 always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
 Father of mercies and faithful God.  
 For you have given us Jesus Christ, your Son,  
 as our Lord and Redeemer.  
 He always showed compassion  
 for children and for the poor,  
 for the sick and for sinners,  
 and he became a neighbour  
 to the oppressed and the afflicted.  
 By word and deed he announced to the world  
 that you are our Father  
 and that you care for all your sons and daughters.  
*(Eucharistic Prayer V/4, Preface)*

Who is Jesus for me?  
 Jesus is the Word made Flesh. The Bread of Life.  
 The Victim offered for our sins on the Cross.  
 The Sacrifice offered at the Holy Mass  
 For the sins of the world and mine.  
 The Word I should speak.  
 The Truth I should tell.  
 The Way I should follow.  
 The Light I should light.  
 The Life I should live.  
 The Love to be loved.

The Joy we should share.  
The Sacrifice we should offer.  
The Peace we should give.  
The Bread of Life we should eat.  
The Hungry we should feed.  
The Thirsty we should satiate.  
The Naked we should clothe.  
The Homeless we should take in.  
The Lonely we should accompany.  
The Unwanted we should want.  
The Leper whose wounds we should wash.  
The Beggar to whom we should give a smile.  
The Drunkard to whom we should listen.  
The Retarded whom we should protect.  
The Little One we should embrace.  
The Blind we should lead.  
The Dumb for whom we should speak.  
The Crippled with whom we should walk.  
The Prostitute whom we should  
remove from danger and befriend.  
The Prisoner whom we should visit.  
The Old whom we should serve.  
Jesus is my God.  
Jesus is my Spouse.  
Jesus is my Life.  
Jesus is my only Love.  
Jesus is my All in All.

*(Saint Teresa of Calcutta)*



## PROPOSALS FOR A COMMUNAL PRAYER VIGIL

### FIRST PRAYER VIGIL

“CHILDREN, LET US LOVE NOT IN WORD  
OR SPEECH BUT IN DEED AND TRUTH”

### WASHING OF FEET

**Celebrant:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**C:** May the Lord Jesus, who went about the world doing good, be with you all.

*Or, if a Bishop presides:*

Peace be with you.

**All: And with your spirit.**

**C:** God, who is love, wanting to make us partakers of his immense love, sent his Son to come to the aid of men worn out and oppressed by sickness and every type of affliction. He surrounded us with such great love that he considers as done to himself anything which is done to the least of his brothers and sisters, and he proclaimed that those who act with mercy are blessed by his Father and heirs of eternal life. He, the Only-Begotten Son, the Lord of heaven and earth, took on the condition of a slave, to the point of emptying himself of his privilege of being like God and taking off his robes to bend down and wash the feet of the Apostles.

Let us listen to the words of the Apostle Paul, which invite us to follow Jesus, having the same thoughts and sentiments in our hearts as he did.

**Reader:** Listen to the word of the Lord from the Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians (2:3-11)

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Brief pause in silence.*

**C:** Having the same attitude as Christ Jesus, we show ourselves to be servants to one another, washing one another's feet: we participate with faith in this humble and poor gesture that reminds us of the service and solidarity that we should practice every day towards our brothers and sisters most in need.

*The presider washes the feet of the first person and they exchange the kiss of peace; this first person then does the same for the person beside him or her.*

*During the washing of the feet, songs of charity are sung.*

## THE OUR FATHER

**C:** Brothers and sisters, after having carried out this gesture of humility and sharing, knowing that it is necessary to overcome every type of egoism in order to arrive at the joy of reciprocal welcoming, we invoke the help of our heavenly Father with the words that the Lord placed on our lips:

**All:** Our Father, who art in heaven...

**C:** Let us pray.

O God, help of those in misery and comfort of the poor, who, after the example of your Son Jesus Christ call us to love our brothers and sisters not with words or speech but with deeds and in the truth, fill us with your merciful charity, so that we can respond generously to the needs of those who knock at the door of our hearts. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, and lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

**Reader:** From the First Letter of Saint John the Apostle (3:18-24)

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and re-

ceive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us.

The word of the Lord.

**R: Thanks be to God.**

*Silence for personal reflection.*

**Responsorial Psalm** (*From Psalm 34*)

**R: The Lord hears the cry of the poor.**

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall be ever in my mouth.  
Let my soul glory in the LORD;  
the lowly will hear me and be glad.

**R: The Lord hears the cry of the poor.**

Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,  
and your faces may not blush with shame.  
When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,  
and from all his distress he saved him.

**R: The Lord hears the cry of the poor.**

The eyes of the LORD are directed toward the righteous  
and his ears toward their cry.  
When the just cry out, the Lord hears them,  
and from all their distress he rescues them.

**R: The Lord hears the cry of the poor.**

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;  
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

The LORD redeems the lives of his servants;  
no one incurs guilt who takes refuge in him.

**R: The Lord hears the cry of the poor.**

**Alleluia, alleluia**

Whatever you did for the least of my brothers  
you did for me, says the Lord.

**Alleluia**

**Priest/Deacon:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to  
Matthew (25: 31-46)

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'

Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The Gospel of the Lord

**R: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*The celebrant may give a homily.*

## EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND ADORATION

*While the Blessed Sacrament is being exposed, a song of adoration is sung.  
Silence for adoration and personal prayer.*

### READINGS FOR MEDITATION

From *On the Duties of the Clergy*, by Saint Ambrose, Bishop  
(*Cfr. Bk. II, Ch. 28, nn. 136-138, 140-141*)

**These are the treasures of the Church**

It is a very great incentive to mercy to share in others' misfortunes, to help the needs of others as far as our means allow, and sometimes even beyond them. For it is better for mercy's sake to take up a case, or to suffer odium rather than to show hard feeling....

The Church has gold, not to store up, but to lay out, and to spend on those who need. What necessity is there to guard what is of no good? Do we not know how much gold and silver the Assyrians took out of the temple of the Lord? Is it not much better that the priests should melt it down for the sustenance of the poor, if other supplies fail, than that a sacrilegious enemy should carry it off and defile it? Would not the Lord Himself say: Why did you suffer so many needy to die of hunger? Surely you had gold? Thou should have given them sustenance. Why are so many captives brought on the slave market, and why are so many unredeemed left to be slain by the enemy? It had been better to preserve living vessels than gold ones.

To this no answer could be given. For what would you say: 'I feared that the temple of God would need its ornaments?' He would answer: 'The sacraments need not gold, nor are they proper to gold only—for they are not bought with gold'. The glory of the sacraments is the redemption of captives. Truly they are precious vessels, for they redeem men from death. That, indeed, is the true treasure of the Lord which effects what His blood effected. Then, indeed, is the vessel of the Lord's blood recognized, when one sees in either redemption, so that the chalice redeems from the enemy those whom His blood redeemed from sin. How beautifully it is said, when long lines of captives are redeemed by the Church: These Christ has redeemed. Behold the gold that can be tried, behold the useful gold, behold the gold of Christ which frees from death, behold the gold whereby modesty is redeemed and chastity is preserved.

Such gold the holy martyr Lawrence preserved for the Lord. For when the treasures of the Church were demanded from him, he promised that he would show them. On the following day he brought the poor together. When asked where the treasures were which he had promised, he pointed to the poor, saying: "These are the treasures of the Church." And truly they were treasures, in whom Christ lives, in whom there is faith in Him. So, too, the Apostle says: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor 4:7)

What greater treasures has Christ than those in whom He says He Himself lives? For thus it is written: "I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Mt 25:35). And again: "What you did to one of these, you did it unto Me" (Mt 25:40). What better treasures has Jesus than those in which He loves to be seen?

These treasures Lawrence pointed out, and prevailed, for the persecutors could not take them away. Jehoiachim, who preserved his gold during the siege and spent it not in providing food, saw his gold carried off, and himself led into captivity. Lawrence, who preferred to spend the gold of the Church on the poor, rather than to keep it in hand for the persecutor, received the sacred crown of martyrdom for the unique and deep-sighted vigor of his meaning.

*Or:*

From the Sermons of Saint Augustine, Bishop  
(*Sermon 389, 4: PL 39, 1704. Trans. Edmund Hill, New City Press, 1995, pp. 406-409*)

**Christ receives whatever you give to the poor.**

If we have anything which we could give to the poor and don't give it, then we leave it behind here, or perhaps lose it here while we are still alive. How many people, after all, have suddenly lost all their possessions at a stroke, after hoarding them so carefully! One incursion of the enemy, and all the savings of the wealthy were lost. Nobody said to the enemy, "I'm keeping it for my children."

Now what did our Lord Jesus Christ say, what did he say, brothers and sisters, to that rich man who was asking his advice about how to obtain eternal life? What did he say to him? "Lose everything you have"? Certainly, even if he had said, "Lose your temporal possessions, to acquire eternal ones..." All the same, he didn't say to him, "Lose everything you have." He could see, after all, that he was in love with his wealth. He didn't say, "Lose it," but "Transfer it where you won't ever lose it." Are you love with your treas-

ures? Are you in love with your money? Are you in love with your wealth? Are you in love with your estates? Whatever it is you love, you have it here on earth; you have what you love in a place where you can lose it, and be lost yourself. My advice to you is: transfer it to heaven. If you keep it here, you will lose what you have, and you will perish together with what you lose; but if you keep it there, you haven't lost it, but you will yourself follow what you have sent ahead. So my advice is, Give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. You won't be left without any treasure, but what you hold on to so anxiously on earth, you will keep in heaven with nothing to worry about at all. So transfer it. I'm giving you advice on how to keep it, not on how to lose it. You will have, he says, treasure in heaven; and come, follow me (Mk 10:21), and I will lead you to your treasure; it's not a question of making a loss, but of making a profit.

People should wake up, they should listen; at least if they have experienced what they are afraid of, they should take steps to rid themselves of their fears, they should transfer their assets to heaven. You store your grain in the ground; your friend comes along, who knows about the nature of grain and of ground, and gives your ignorance a lesson: "What have you done? You've stored grain low in the ground; it's a damp place, what you've stored there will rot, you will lose the fruit of your work."

So what must I do?

"Transfer it to a higher place, above ground." You listen to your friend giving you advice about your grain, and you ignore God giving you advice about your heart. You are afraid to store your grain in the ground, and you let your heart get spoiled in the ground. Look, here is the Lord your God, when he's giving you advice about your treasure, also giving you some advice about your heart: For where, he says, your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mt 6:21). Lift up your heart, he says, to heaven, or it will rot in the earth. It's the advice of one who wishes to preserve you, not to destroy you.

So if that's how it is, how sorry are those people feeling who haven't done this? What are they saying to themselves now? "We would have had in heaven what we have lost on earth." The enemy broke into the house; could he break into heaven? He killed the servant on guard; could he kill the Lord keeping the place where no thief can get in, nor moth spoil things (Mt 6:20)? How many must be saying, "We would have had it there, we should have stored our treasure there in that place, where after a short while, without anything to worry about, we would follow them. Why didn't we listen to our Lord? Why did we ignore our father's warning, and so experience the enemy's incursion? Many people, then, are feeling very sorry for themselves.

Because there was one man—and this really did happen, so it's said—one man, not rich, but all the same fat, on his slender means, with the corpulence of charity, who had sold, as was usual, a gold guinea piece, and from the price he got for it gave instructions for a hundred dollars to be distributed to the poor. It was done. Thereupon that ancient enemy, that is the devil, to ensure that he repented of his good work, and blotted out by his grumbling what he had done rightly by his obedience, sent a thief and took away the whole sum from which such a petty amount had been given to the poor. The devil was waiting for words of blasphemy, and all he heard was words of praise. He was waiting for the man to stagger, and he found him stronger in faith than ever. The enemy indeed was hoping he would repent, and repent he died. But notice what of: "Woe is me," he said, "for not giving the whole lot away! I mean I have lost all that I did not give away, because I did not deposit it in the place which no thief can get at."

So if that is the advice we have been given, let us not be slow in following such good advice. If what we possess is to be transferred, let us move it to the place where we can't lose it. What are the poor people we give charity to, but our porters, whom we hire to transfer our assets from earth to heaven? You give the stuff to your porter; he carries what you give him to heaven. "How," you say, "does he carry it to heaven? Look, I see him spending it all on food."

But that's just it; it's by spending it on food, not by keeping it, that he transports it. Or has this slipped your mind: Come, you blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat. And, Whenever you did it for one of the least of mine, you did it for me (Mt 25:34-35. 40)? If you haven't ignored the beggar there in front of you, notice who it is that what you have given the beggar has got to. Whenever you did it for one of the least of mine, you did it for me. Christ has received what you have given; it has been received by the one who gave you the means to give it; it has been received by the one who at the end will give you himself.

*Or:*

From some of the Letters and Spiritual Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul

*(Epist. 2546: Correspondance, entretiens, documents, Paris 1922-1925, 7)*

### Serving Christ in the poor

Even though the poor are often rough and unrefined, we must not judge them from external appearances nor from the mental gifts they seem to have received. On the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will observe that they are taking the place of the Son of God who chose to be poor. Although in his passion he almost lost the appearance of a man and was considered a fool by the Gentiles and a stumbling block by the Jews, he showed them that his mission was to preach to the poor: He sent me to preach the good news to the poor. We also ought to have this same spirit and imitate Christ's actions, that is, we must take care of the poor, console them, help them, support their cause.

Since Christ willed to be born poor, he chose for himself disciples who were poor. He made himself the servant of the poor and shared their poverty. He went so far as to say that he would consider every deed which either helps or harms the poor as done for or against himself. Since God surely loves the poor, he also loves those who love the poor. For when one person holds another dear,

he also includes in his affection anyone who loves or serves the one he loves. That is why we hope that God will love us for the sake of the poor. So when we visit the poor and needy, we try to be understanding where they are concerned. We sympathize with them so fully that we can echo Paul's words: I have become all things to all men. Therefore, we must try to be stirred by our neighbors' worries and distress. We must beg God to pour into our hearts sentiments of pity and compassion and to fill them again and again with these dispositions.

It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible. If a needy person requires medicine or other help during prayer time, do whatever has to be done with peace of mind. Offer the deed to God as your prayer. Do not become upset or feel guilty because you interrupted your prayer to serve the poor. God is not neglected if you leave him for such service. One of God's works is merely interrupted so

that another can be carried out. So when you leave prayer to serve some poor person, remember that this very service is performed for God. Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity. Since she is a noble mistress, we must do whatever she commands. With renewed devotion, then, we must serve the poor, especially outcasts and beggars. They have been given to us as our masters and patrons.

*Or:*

From the Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* of Pope Benedict XVI (25 December 2005, n. 31)

#### The distinctiveness of the Church's charitable activity

The increase in diversified organizations engaged in meeting various human needs is ultimately due to the fact that the command of love of neighbour is inscribed by the Creator in man's very nature.

“  
WHATEVER  
YOU DID FOR ONE  
OF THESE LEAST  
BROTHERS OF MINE,  
YOU DID FOR ME

”  
(MT. 25:40)



It is also a result of the presence of Christianity in the world, since Christianity constantly revives and acts out this imperative, so often profoundly obscured in the course of time. [...] For this reason, it is very important that the Church's charitable activity maintains all of its splendour and does not become just another form of social assistance. So what are the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity?

a) Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc. The Church's charitable organizations, beginning with those of Caritas (at diocesan, national and international levels), ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. [...] Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity [...].

b) Christian charitable activity must be independent of parties and ideologies. It is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs. [...] We contribute to a better world only by personally doing good now, with full commitment and wherever we have the opportunity, independently of partisan strategies and programmes. The Christian's programme —the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus—is “a heart which sees”. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly. Obviously when charitable activity is carried out by the Church as a communitarian initiative, the

spontaneity of individuals must be combined with planning, foresight and cooperation with other similar institutions.

c) Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends. But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside. For it is always concerned with the whole man. Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. He knows that God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8) and that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love. He knows—to return to the questions raised earlier—that disdain for love is disdain for God and man alike; it is an attempt to do without God. Consequently, the best defence of God and man consists precisely in love. It is the responsibility of the Church's charitable organizations to reinforce this awareness in their members, so that by their activity—as well as their words, their silence, their example—they may be credible witnesses to Christ.

*Or:*

From the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis (24 November 2013, nn. 197-199)

### The special place of the poor in God's people

God's heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself “became poor” (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the “yes” uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Saviour was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families; he was pre-

sented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Lk 2:24; Lev 5:7); he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: “Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God” (Lk 6:20); he made himself one of them: “I was hungry and you gave me food to eat”, and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:5ff.).

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy”. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have “this mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:5). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness”. This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – “is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty”. This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.

Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit

mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves”. This loving attentiveness is the beginning of a true concern for their person which inspires me effectively to seek their good. This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: “The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely”. The poor person, when loved, “is esteemed as of great value”, and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one’s own personal or political interest. Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation. Only this will ensure that “in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom?” Without the preferential option for the poor, “the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications”.

*Silence for personal reflection.*

## LITANY

**Leader:** Lord, Love is patient,

**All:** Give us the patience that deals with one day after the other.

**L:** Lord, Love is kind,

**All:** Help us always to will the good of the other before our own.

**L:** Lord, Love is not jealous,

**All:** Teach us to rejoice in everyone’s success.

**L:** Lord, Love does not boast,  
**All:** Remind us not to tout ourselves to others about what we do for them.  
**L:** Lord, Love does not put on airs,  
**All:** Grant us the courage to admit, “I was wrong”.  
**L:** Lord, Love is not rude,  
**All:** Make us able to see your face in every face.  
**L:** Lord, Love is not selfish,  
**All:** Breathe the wind of generosity into our lives.  
**L:** Lord, Love is not irritable,  
**All:** Keep far from us the actions and words that wound others.  
**L:** Lord, Love is not resentful,  
**All:** Reconcile us with the pardon that forgets wrongs.  
**L:** Lord, Love does not rejoice in injustice,  
**All:** Open our hearts to the needs of those around us.  
**L:** Lord, Love rejoices in the truth,  
**All:** Guide our steps toward you, who are the Way, the Truth, and the Life.  
**L:** Lord, Love covers all things,  
**All:** Help us to cover our days together with love.  
**L:** Lord, Love believes all things,  
**All:** Help us to believe that love moves mountains.  
**L:** Lord, Love hopes all things,  
**All:** Help us to hope in love beyond any other hope.  
**L:** Lord, teach us not to love ourselves, not to love only those dear to us, not to love only those who love us. Teach us to think of others, to love the person whom no one else loves. Lord, make us suffer from the sufferings of others. Grant us the grace to understand that in every moment, while we live a life too happy and protected by you, there are millions of human beings who are, in fact, your children and our brothers and sisters,

but who die of hunger,  
 without deserving to die of hunger,  
 who die of cold,  
 without deserving to die of cold.  
 Lord, have mercy on all the poor of the world.  
 And, O Lord, do not allow us anymore  
 to live happily by ourselves.  
 Make us feel the distress of misery all around us,  
 and free us from our egoism.

*(Raoul Follereau)*

*A song of adoration may follow.*

*After the song, there is a brief period of silence for personal prayer.*

## EUCHARISTIC BENEDICTION

*While the people kneel, a Eucharistic Hymn is sung.*

Tantum ergo sacramentum  
 veneremur cernui,  
 et antiquum documentum  
 novo cedat ritui;  
 praestet fides supplementum  
 sensum defectui.

Genitori Genitoque  
 Laus et iubilatio,  
 salus, honor, virtus quoque  
 sit et benedictio;  
 procedenti ab utroque  
 compar sit laudatio. Amen.

*DOWN in adoration falling,  
 Lo! the sacred Host we hail,  
 Lo! oe'r ancient forms departing  
 Newer rites of grace prevail;  
 Faith for all defects supplying,  
 Where the feeble senses fail.*

*To the everlasting Father,  
 And the Son Who reigns on high  
 With the Holy Spirit proceeding  
 Forth from each eternally,  
 Be salvation, honor blessing,  
 Might and endless majesty. Amen.*

**P:** Let us pray. O God, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us a memorial of your Passion, grant us, we pray, so to revere the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood, that we may always experience in ourselves the fruits of your redemption. Who live and reign with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever.

**All: Amen**

*The Presider gives the blessing with the Most Blessed Sacrament.*

### **The Divine Praises**

*A reader intones, and the assembly repeats:*

1. Blessed be God.
2. Blessed be His Holy Name.
3. Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.
4. Blessed be the Name of Jesus.
5. Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
6. Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
7. Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
8. Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
9. Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.
10. Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.
11. Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.
12. Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
13. Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
14. Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints. Amen.

*While the Blessed Sacrament is being reposed in the tabernacle a song is sung.*

### **Marian Antiphon**

Salve, Regina,  
Mater misericordiae,  
vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.  
Ad te clamamus, exsules filii Evae.  
Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes  
in hac lacrimarum valle.  
Eia ergo, advocata nostra,  
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte.  
Et Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,  
nobis, post hoc exsilium, ostende.  
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria!



## SUGGESTIONS FOR A COMMUNAL PRAYER VIGIL

### SECOND PRAYER VIGIL

#### WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AND BELIEVE IN THE LOVE GOD HAS FOR US

*The place of the liturgical gathering is dimly lit. A large crucifix is located in the middle of the space, well lit. Before the entrance procession begins a voice is heard, but the reader is not seen. The reader, accompanied by instrumental music, reads the passage from the First Letter of Saint John.*

#### **Voice of the Reader:**

The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

*(1 Jn 3:16-19)*

*There is a brief pause for silence. Then all the lights are turned on and the entrance procession begins.*

#### **Song**

#### **Greeting:**

**Celebrant:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**C:** The One and Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who loves and directs history with the action of his grace, be with you all.

*Or, if a Bishop presides:*

**B:** Peace be with you.

**All:** And with your spirit.

**Reader:** From the Message of the Holy Father Pope Francis for the World Day of the Poor (n. 6.8)

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. [...] I invite the whole Church, and men and women of good will everywhere, to turn their gaze on this day to all those who stretch out their hands and plead for our help and solidarity. They are our brothers and sisters, created and loved by the one Heavenly Father. 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 heart of all the many concrete initiatives carried out on this day should always be prayer.

**C:** Brothers and sisters, Pope Francis has thus given us an invitation to pray, and we will do so in this vigil, so that we can learn from the Lord Jesus to touch his body with our hands, in the poor.

*A brief pause for silence*

**C:** Let us pray.  
O God, fount of every communion,  
none of us has anything to give to our brothers and sisters  
if we do not receive from you first;

give us your Spirit, the bond of perfect unity,  
so that we are transformed into a new humanity,  
free and united in your love.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Please be seated.

1.

It is He who has loved us

THE WORD OF GOD

**Reader:** Listen to the word of the Lord from the First Letter of Saint John the Apostle (4:10-16)

Beloved, in this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

## THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

**Reader:** From the Message of Pope Francis for the First World Day of the Poor (n. 1)

The seriousness with which the “beloved disciple” hands down Jesus’ command to our own day is made even clearer by the contrast between the empty words so frequently on our lips and the concrete deeds against which we are called to measure ourselves. Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to take the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor.

**Gesture: The Perfume**

*Accompanied by instrumental music, a jar with a perfumed nard is brought into the middle of the assembly and placed next to the crucifix.*

**Leader:** Let us stand.

*Several youth walk up to stand in front of the celebrant, who gives them some small bottles of perfume, saying:*

**C:** Love like Christ has loved us, and your hearts will give off his perfume.

*While instrumental music is played, the youth return to their places and pass the perfume from one person to the next, pouring a little bit on their hands.*

*At the end of the symbolic action, the presider says the following prayer:*

**C:** Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have freed us from sin and gave us new birth from water and the Holy Spirit,

uniting us to your people; consecrate us with the oil of salvation, so that, grafted into Christ, priest, king, and prophet, we may always be his good perfume, so that the world may believe in you. Through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

**Leader:** Let us sit.

## 2. This poor one cried and the Lord heard

### THE WORD OF GOD

**Reader:** Listen to the word of the Lord from the Letter of Saint James the Apostle (2:5-6, 14-17)

Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? But you dishonored the poor person. Are not the rich oppressing you? And do they themselves not haul you off to court? [...]What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

**Responsorial Psalm** *(From Psalm 34)***R/:** This poor one cried and the Lord heard.**1 Reader:**

I will bless the LORD at all times;  
 his praise shall be ever in my mouth.  
 Let my soul glory in the LORD;  
 the lowly will hear me and be glad.  
 Magnify the LORD with me;  
 and let us exalt his name together.  
 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
 delivered me from all my fears.

**R/:**

**2 R:** Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,  
 and your faces may not blush with shame.  
 When the poor one called out, the LORD heard,  
 and from all his distress he saved him.  
 The angel of the LORD encamps  
 around those who fear him, and he saves them.  
 Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
 blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him.

**R/:**

**3 R:** Fear the LORD, you his holy ones;  
 nothing is lacking to those who fear him.  
 The rich grow poor and go hungry,  
 but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.  
 Come, children, listen to me;  
 I will teach you fear of the LORD.  
 Who is the man who delights in life,  
 who loves to see the good days?

**R/:**

**4 R:** Keep your tongue from evil,  
 your lips from speaking lies.  
 Turn from evil and do good;  
 seek peace and pursue it.  
 The eyes of the LORD are directed toward the righteous  
 and his ears toward their cry.  
 The LORD's face is against evildoers  
 to wipe out their memory from the earth.

**R/:**

**5 R:** When the just cry out, the Lord hears them,  
 and from all their distress he rescues them.  
 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;  
 and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.  
 Many are the troubles of the righteous,  
 but the LORD delivers him from them all.  
 He watches over all his bones;  
 not one of them shall be broken.

**R/:**

**6 R:** Evil will slay the wicked;  
 those who hate the righteous are condemned.  
 The LORD is the redeemer of the souls of his servants;  
 and none are condemned who take refuge in him.

**All:** The Holy Spirit makes us his temples  
 and gives us communion with the Father and the Son;  
 may he make us the Church who sings in heaven,  
 and who spreads joy on the earth.

**Gesture: The Bread**

*Baskets of bread are brought to the presider  
 and then shown to the assembly.*

*The celebrant says:*

**C:** Pope Francis reminds us in his Message: “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. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters. The Our Father is a prayer said in the plural: the bread for which we ask is “ours”, and that entails sharing, participation and joint responsibility”.

**Leader:** Let us stand.

*The celebrant says the prayer of blessing:*

**C:** Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the world, who nourish the entire world in your goodness, in kindness, compassion, and mercy. “He gives food to all the living, for his mercy is eternal”. Because of your great goodness we do not every lack food. May we never be in need for love of your great Name. Because He nourishes all, is generous toward all, and prepares food for all the creatures He has created. May your name be blessed on the lips of every living creature forever, in time and in eternity, as it is written: “When you eat and are filled, you will bless the name of the Lord, your God, for the good land which He has given you.” May you be blessed, Lord, for the earth and for food.

**All: Blessed be the Lord, who gives food to every living creature.**

*The baskets of bread are left at the foot of the altar, from where they will be taken up again at the end of the vigil.*

**Leader:** Let us sit.

### 3. To touch with our hands the body of Christ

#### THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

**Reader:** From the Message of Pope Francis for the First World Day of the Poor (nn. 3, 5)

If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. 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.

#### COMMUNAL PENITENTIAL PRAYER

**C:** Let us turn to the Lord with a cry of prayer, asking him for compassion and mercy because we have generated and ignored situations of poverty. Let us beseech him:

**All: Kyrie, Kyrie eleison.**

**Leader:** For the faces marked by pain, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by marginalization, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by oppression, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by violence, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by torture, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by prison, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by war, we implore you. *R/.*

**L:** For the faces marked by the privation of liberty, we implore you. *R/.*

- L:** For the faces marked by offenses against their dignity, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by ignorance, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by illiteracy, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by health emergencies, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by lack of work, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by human trafficking and slavery, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by exile, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by misery, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces marked by forced migration, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces of women, men, and children exploited in the interests of profit, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For the faces struck by the perverse logic of power, we implore you. **R/.**
- L:** For faces marked by the perverse logic of money, we implore you. **R/.**

### **Gesture: The Hands**

*While a penitential song is sung, everyone goes up to the sanctuary to make a gesture of veneration with their hands at the foot of the crucifix.*

### **Song**

*After this symbolic action, the celebrant invites the assembly to exchange a sign of peace.*

**C:** Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: “Peace I leave you, my peace I give you”, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

**C:** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**All:** And with your spirit.

**C:** In the love of the one who called us: let us offer each other a sign of peace.

## THE OUR FATHER

**C:** “When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters” (Pope Francis). For this we pray together, singing: Our Father...

## BLESSING

**C:** Let us pray.

Father, you are a God who is humble and good,  
 a God who chooses the poor and the weak  
 to confound the great and the powerful,  
 always attentive to the lot of the just:  
 even if we do not always understand,  
 we ask you to show us how, for you revealed yourself  
 in your Son as the liberator of the poor;  
 and that we may be attentive ourselves  
 to the way in which you act in history,  
 and how you want your work of liberation  
 to be continued by the poor in the whole world.  
 Through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

**C:** The Lord be with you.

**All:** And with your spirit.

**C:** May the God of all consolation  
 order your days in his peace  
 and grant you the gifts of his blessing.

**All: Amen.**

**C:** May he free you always from every distress  
 and confirm your hearts in his love.

**All: Amen.**

**C:** So that on this life's journey  
you may be effective in good works,  
rich in the gifts of hope, faith and charity,  
and may come happily to eternal life.

**All: Amen.**

**C:** And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on you and remain with you forever.

**All: Amen.**

**C:** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All: Amen.**

### Song

*At the end of the vigil, each person receives a piece of the blessed bread to eat in fraternity with the community.*



## The Logo of the World Day of the Poor



The dimension of reciprocity is emphasized in the logo of the World Day of the Poor. There is an open door, on the threshold of which are found two people. Both extend a hand; one to ask for help, the other with the intention of providing it. In the end, it is difficult to figure out which of the two is the true poor person. Or, better, both are poor. The one who holds out his hand to enter asks for sharing; the one who holds out his hand to help is invited to go out to share. These are two extended hands that are found wherever someone offers something. Two hands that express solidarity and that prompt a person not to remain

in the doorway, but to go to encounter the other. The poor person can enter the house, once the person in the house has understood that help means sharing. The words that Pope Francis wrote in his Message become all the more meaningful in this context: "Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no "ifs" or "buts" or "maybes": they are hands that call down God's blessing upon their brothers and sisters" (n.5).

# PASTORAL PROPOSAL

## SOME IDEAS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

- Every Diocese (or religious community) could organize a way to bring a message of peace and closeness simultaneously to all the places of suffering and marginality nearby, so as to make the Church's unity visible in the same moment through the centrality of the poor. In particular, to places such as soup kitchens, shelters, prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, treatment centers, etc., so that the words of the Pope could arrive to everyone at the same time on this day.
- Every religious community, on this day, could take on an initiative such as: taking groceries to a needy family, offering a meal for the poor, purchasing equipment for elderly persons who are not self-sufficient, donating a vehicle to a family, or making a contribution to the Caritas fund for families, etc.
- Every Diocese, on this day, could choose a symbolic action for the poor that they would carry out during the year, and which could be communicated to the Holy Father.

## GOALS

*“Am I my brother's keeper?”*

**To be aware** of the presence of the poor around us, who are not the least, the excluded, those different, but are witnesses among us of the proximity of the Kingdom of God, which makes an appeal to us.

**To know** the other not only to respect him or her in his or her diversity, but also to let ourselves be appealed to by the other. Who are “the poor” today, and where are they around me, in the area in which I live? To understand poverty in order to develop means of sharing and to **create relationships**.

**To promote** a culture that considers material goods as “gifts” to redistribute in order to establish economic justice. In the face of the injustices of the world, the unequal distribution of resources, the exaltation of individual profit as the highest priority in the scale of values, in the face of these situations, a Christian cannot remain silent. Just as a Christian cannot remain silent before models of waste, consumerism, insatiable acquisition of possessions, or the waste of ecological resources. Just as a Christian cannot remain silent when confronted with some of the economic choices that reduce peoples to slavery and thrust entire nations down into the gutter.

## PROPOSALS

*“The Lord led me to them and I showed them mercy”*

The following proposals can be structured around two reference points: one cultural and one the pastoral practice of “mercy”.

### **On the cultural horizon:**

- preparatory meetings to put the encounter with the faces of the poor at the center of this day, faces that invite us to go out to meet them, to accompany them from the “doorways” or from the “margins”—where, often, we confine them—to the inside (at the heart) of the community (see the logo);
- to know the poor and the new forms of poverty (economic, social, human), through meetings with those at the head of associations that work in these spheres, in the area of the ecclesial community;

- to know the stories of the poor through their testimonies and meeting them; to know their true lives, shared in a fraternal climate, without creating pietism or a “side-show” atmosphere;
- to propose meetings with representatives of an economy of communion, of civil economics, and a just economy;
- encounters with local organizations who actualize, in their own businesses, an economy of communion or solidarity.

**On the horizon of the pastoral practice “of mercy”:**

- to go with representatives of associations to the actual places where the poor live, or to the sites of associations who welcome the poor, in order to understand what their needs are and under what circumstances one can construct human rapports that promote persons and their dignity;
- to create bonds of familiarity/trust with the poor in the area, seeking to insert and involve them more in the life of the community;
- to delineate possible opportunities to offer them useful tools for a greater involvement in both ecclesial and social life.

**The week of preparation for the World Day of the Poor could be the occasion to sow seeds that will mature over time; the beginning of a journey that cannot be put off any longer, which will permit us to respond in a different way to the question God asked Cain (“Where is your brother?”), by taking care of our brothers and sisters, both as individuals and as an ecclesial community.**

THE  
SAINTS  
AND  
BLESSEDS  
OF CHARITY  
OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup>  
AND 21<sup>ST</sup>  
CENTURIES





**Saint Teresa of Calcutta**  
(1917 - 1980)  
“Life is made to love and be loved”



**Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe**  
(1894-1941)  
“Only Love creates, hate destroys.”



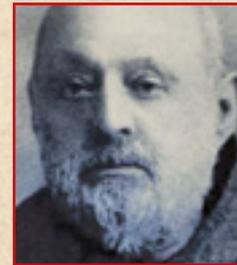
**Saint Alfonso Maria Fusco**  
(1839 - 1910)  
“I wish that my shadow could also do good!”



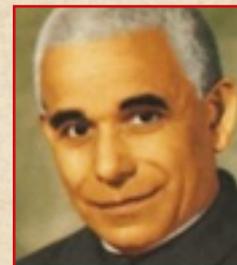
**Saint Filippo Smaldone**  
(1848 - 1923)  
An exemplary priest, always ready to dedicate himself to everyone.



**Saint Giulia Salzano**  
(1846 - 1929)  
“Love and make Christ known”.



**Saint Alberto Chmielowski**  
(1845 - 1916)  
“You must be as good as the bread that everyone can take to satisfy their hunger.”



**Saint Luigi Orione**  
(1872 - 1940)  
“Our charity does not bar doors shut”.



**Saint Katharine Mary Drexel**  
(1858 - 1955)  
“If we want to serve God and our neighbor well, we should show our joy in the service that we give to Him and to them”.



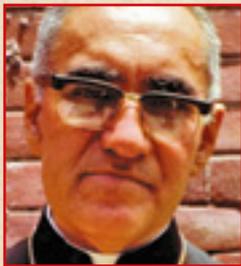
**Saint Maria Elisabetta Hasselblad**  
(1870 - 1957)  
“Go to heaven with your hands full of love.”



**Saint Enrichetta Alfieri**  
(1891 - 1951)  
“Charity is a fire that loves to get bigger by burning”.



**Saint Alberto Hurtado**  
(1901 - 1952)  
“I feel that I am a poor person; further, if the poor are my masters, I feel myself fortunate to be their errand boy”.



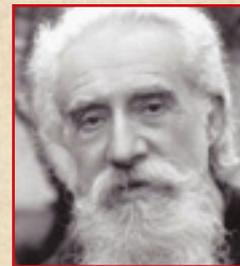
**Blessed Oscar Arnulfo Romero**  
(1917 - 1980)  
“We want men who know how to say yes to justice, no to injustice, and who know how to use the precious goods of life”.



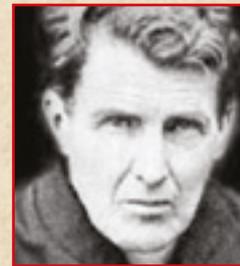
**Blessed Engelmar Unzeitig**  
(1911 - 1945)  
“Love doubles our strength, it makes us creative, content, and free”.



**Blessed Odoardo Focherini**  
(1907-1944)  
“I do what I can; where I cannot arrive, God arrives. Because I work for him, he is committed to helping me.



**Blessed Vladimir Ghika**  
(1873 - 1954)  
“The poor person sees Christ come to him under the appearance of one who comforts him, and the benefactor sees the suffering Christ appear in the poor person, before whom he bends”.



**Blessed John Sullivan, Jesuit Priest**  
(1861 - 1933)  
He was greatly loved and sought out as a father by the poor and suffering.



**Blessed Father Stanley Ablas Rother**

(1935 - 1981)

Beatification 23/09/2017

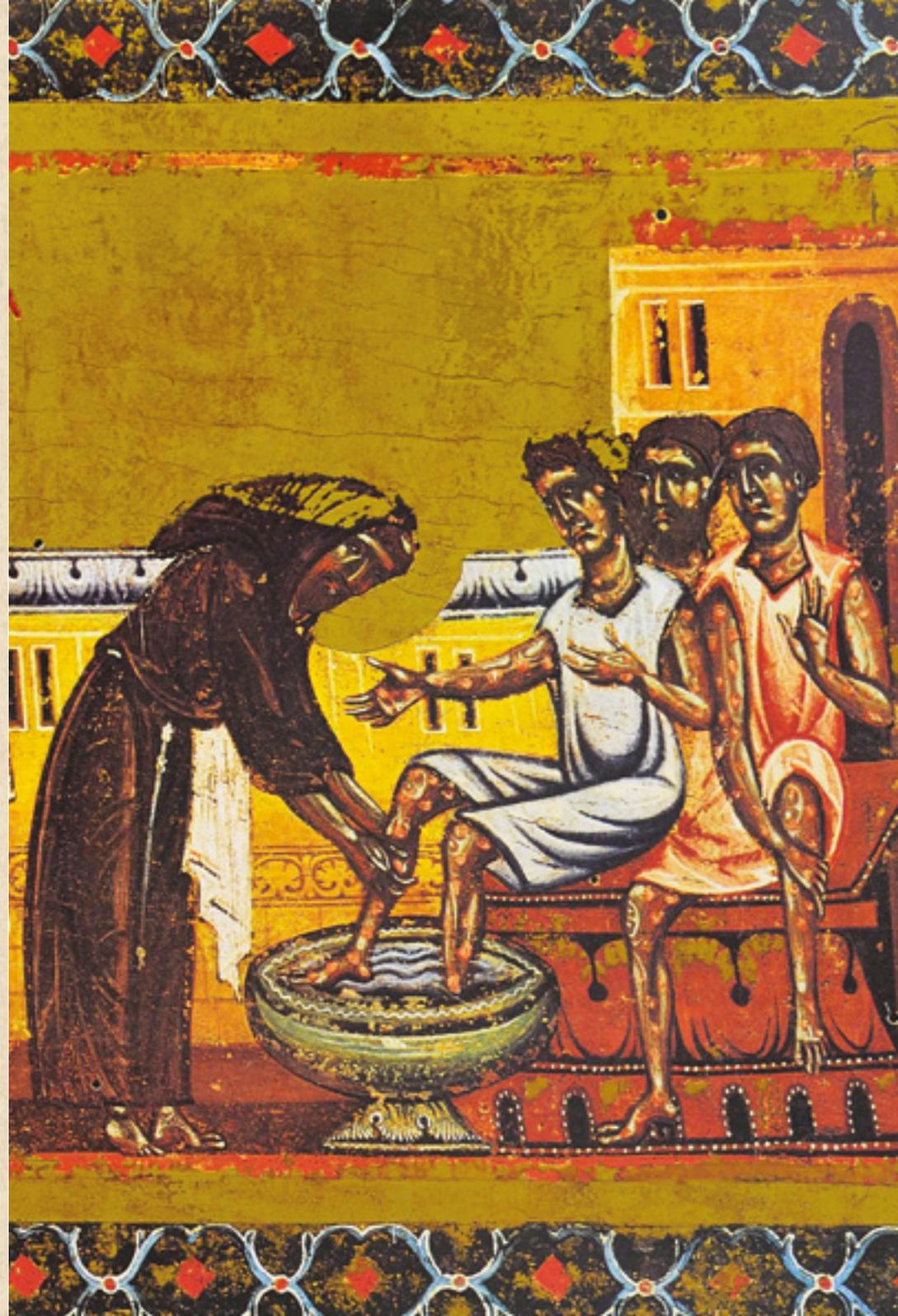
“Pray for us, so that we can be a sign of the love of Christ for our people”.



**Blessed Hildegard Burjan**

(1883 - 1933)

In the poor and suffering, she saw the Face of Jesus, and was thirsty for justice.



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by His Excellency Archbishop Fisichella

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Love not in word  
but in deed

2017

*«Blessed, therefore, are the open hands  
that embrace the poor and help them:  
they are hands that bring hope».*

Francis