

Pastoral Aid for the Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

(3rd World Day of the Poor)

November 17, 2019

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Reflection on the [Sunday Readings](#)

Introduction:

- When we hear the word “poverty,” we can think of many things: poverty of spirit, lack of love, isolation, etc. On World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis invites us to focus on material poverty in which individuals, families, and communities lack access to the basic things they need to live and thrive: nutritious food, adequate housing, safe neighborhoods, good education, healthcare, and decent jobs with fair pay, for example.
- *[Insert a story from your community—what families are experiencing in your parish, a recent human interest story about poverty from a local news source, etc. This is your chance to connect today’s homily with the real faces and people in your community. If a local story is not possible, you can instead use the following text to encourage people to think of their own example.]* An estimated 38.1 million people live in poverty in the United States.
 - Take a moment to think about one person or one family you know, who has been affected by poverty or related issues such as unemployment, debt, lack of quality health insurance, etc.
 - Or, you might call to mind the faces of an individual or family that our parish serves through *[mention a ministry of the parish that serves those in need]*. What daily challenges do they face?
- Today is the third World Day of the Poor, a day established by Pope Francis that reminds us that integral to the teaching of the Gospel is the commitment to supporting and uplifting the poor and vulnerable in our midst.

First Reading (Mal 3:19-20A); **Psalms** (98:5-6, 7-8, 9); **Second Reading** (2 Thes 3:7-12), and **Gospel** (Lk 21:5-19)

- In the **first reading**, the prophet Malachi predicts the coming of the day of justice, when those who suffer at the hands of injustice will find relief and those who are faithful to the Lord’s teachings will be made righteous (v. 19-20A). The **Psalmist** also speaks of God’s promise to “rule the world with justice” (v. 9). These Scripture passages must have offered great encouragement for those listeners experiencing injustice and hardship.
- In the **second reading**, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians, who were enduring many hardships, not to lose hope that the day of the Lord will come. Until then, we must not grow tired but must remain diligent to the teachings of Christ (v. 9-12) until he comes again.

- In today's **Gospel**, Luke tells of Jesus' prediction of the end times and his warning that those who wish to follow him will face extreme hardship and even persecution (v. 12). Written at a time when the followers of Christ were facing persecution and deception, the Gospel writer was trying to give the listeners encouragement in the face of challenges.
- Today, followers of Christ continue to face challenges. We may at times experience marginalization because of our counter-witness to mainstream values that stems from our faith. At other times, we may make sacrifices, forgoing worldly possessions or success when our Gospel-inspired choices prioritize family or service over economic gain.
- Pope Francis has repeatedly reminded us about one additional challenge to which Christians are called: that of caring for the poor, walking with them, understanding their stories. In his message for the [3rd World Day of the Poor](#), Pope Francis writes, "The situation of the poor obliges us not to keep our distance from the body of the Lord, who suffers in them. Instead, we are called to touch his flesh and to be personally committed in offering a service that is an authentic form of evangelization" (no. 6).
- This challenge harkens back to the first reading from Malachi, which emphasizes God's care and concern for the poor—a care and concern that we are called to imitate. Those who are poor are encouraged by the promise in Malachi: "But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays" (3:20).
- Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of this promise: "Jesus who inaugurated his kingdom by placing the poor at the center, wanted to tell us precisely this: he inaugurated the kingdom, but he has entrusted to us, his disciples, the task of carrying it forward with responsibility for giving hope to the poor. . . . This responsibility is not something that the Christian community may underestimate. The credibility of our proclamation and the witness of Christians depends on it " ([Message for 3rd World Day of the Poor](#), no. 5).
- On this 3rd World Day of the Poor, we are asked to embody God's promise of justice and live in ways that ensure that the cries of the poor among us are heard: "It is not easy to be witnesses of Christian hope in the context of a consumerist culture, a culture of waste concerned only for the spread of a shallow and ephemeral wellbeing. A change of mentality is needed, in order to rediscover what is essential and to give substance and verve to the preaching of the kingdom of God" (no. 7).

Application:

- How are we called to apply these lessons? Think back to *[insert earlier example from introduction]* that we called to mind earlier. How can we respond to Pope Francis' call, and address the needs of the poor in our parish, our neighborhood, and our communities on this World Day of the Poor?
- This weekend is the 3rd World Day of the Poor, and next weekend is the annual collection, taken around the country, to support the work of the [Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#), or CCHD. This collection supports the work of groups that empower low-income people to participate in decisions that affect their lives and break

the cycle of poverty. Many of the projects supported by CCHD embody the corporal works of mercy and include protecting worker rights, expanding access to health care, and reforming the criminal justice system. This national collection is the primary source of funding for CCHD's anti-poverty grants and education programs aimed at fostering a culture of life and hope in communities across the nation. Twenty-five percent of funds collected remain in each diocese to support local projects.

- Here is an example of the kind of work this collection supports. *[Note to homilist: Select one of the stories below most relevant to your parish, or instead use a local example of work that CCHD supports in your diocese. Consult the [PovertyUSA map](#) (Search by state with the dropdown menu) to see groups that CCHD funds in your diocese.]*
 - **Example 1:** In St. Louis, MO, the Metropolitan Congregations United (MCU) is tirelessly putting faith into action by caring for the community. Too often, children marginalized by discrimination and poverty move through what is called the "school-to-prison pipeline." They are incarcerated at disproportionately high rates. But with support from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, MCU's Break the Pipeline campaign is working to eliminate out-of-school suspensions for students younger than third grade. The campaign is also working to change the age to be tried as an adult from 17 to 18 years old, so that 17-year-olds are tried in the **juvenile justice** system, with its greater focus on rehabilitation. These changes help keep St. Louis kids in school and out of the criminal justice system.
 - **Example 2:** The neighborhoods of central west Baltimore, MD, face high rates of poverty, violence, and drug use. The No Boundaries Coalition's **youth-led organizing initiative**—the Baltimore Youth Organizing Project provides training for young people between the ages of 14 and 21 on community organizing, city government, the budgeting process, and ways to conduct effective meetings. Thanks to this training, these young leaders launched a three-month campaign that restored \$2.8 million of funding to after-school programming in the city. This funding had been cut from Baltimore's budget. But after youth advocated with the city council and mayor, the funding was restored by a unanimous city council vote.
 - **Example 3:** If you travel to the Rio Grande Valley in southwestern Colorado, you will find steadfast mountains guarding the beautiful landscape. Many of our brothers and sisters who live in the valley came from Mexico and Guatemala, and they have enriched the rich agricultural and community-driven heritage of this region. But this community faces great **economic challenges**. It lives in one of the poorest regions in Colorado, characterized by high unemployment. One-third of children live in poverty. CCHD supports an incubator program that equips aspiring farmers to create small farming enterprises and strengthen connections to local food networks. Workshops during the nonproductive seasons cover topics as varied as budgeting, production planning, risk management, and food safety. At the end of these workshops, small farmers receive help developing business plans to launch food-related farming enterprises.

- Pope Francis writes in his [World Day of the Poor message](#): “Before all else, the poor need God and his love, made visible by “the saints next door,” people who by the simplicity of their lives express clearly the power of Christian love. God uses any number of ways and countless means to reach people’s hearts. . . . The poor need our hands, to be lifted up; our hearts, to feel anew the warmth of affection; our presence, to overcome loneliness. In a word, they need love” (no. 8).
- This echoes the reflection in Pope Francis’s recent apostolic exhortation, [Gaudete et Exsultate](#), on the role of the community in the journey to holiness: “A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father’s plan” (no. 145).
- Together, we can open our ears and our hearts to the cries of the poor and respond with a “loving attentiveness” ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), 199) and “sow tangible seeds of hope . . . so that no one will feel deprived of closeness and solidarity” ([Message for 3rd World Day of the Poor](#), 10).

Quotes from Pope Francis’ [Message for the Third World Day of the Poor](#)

“The hope of the poor will not perish forever’ (Ps 9:19). These words of the Psalm remain timely. They express a profound truth that faith impresses above all on the hearts of the poor, restoring lost hope in the face of injustice, sufferings and the uncertainties of life.” (no. 1).

“Scripture constantly speaks of God acting on behalf of the poor. He is the one who ‘hears their cry’ and ‘comes to their aid’; he ‘protects’ and ‘defends’ them; he ‘rescues’ and ‘saves’ them... Indeed, the poor will never find God indifferent or silent in the face of their plea. God is the one who renders justice and does not forget (cf. Ps 40:18; 70:6); he is their refuge and he never fails to come to their assistance (cf. Ps 10:14)” (no. 4).

“We can build any number of walls and close our doors in the vain effort to feel secure in our wealth, at the expense of those left outside. It will not be that way forever. The ‘day of the Lord,’ as described by the prophets (cf. Am 5:18; Is 2-5; Jl 1-3), will destroy the barriers created between nations and replace the arrogance of the few with the solidarity of many. The marginalization painfully experienced by millions of persons cannot go on for long. Their cry is growing louder and embraces the entire earth. In the words of Father Primo Mazzolari: ‘the poor are a constant protest against our injustices; the poor are a powder keg. If it is set on fire, the world will explode’” (no. 4).

“We can never elude the urgent appeal that Scripture makes on behalf of the poor. Wherever we look, the word of God points to the poor, those who lack the necessities of life because they depend on others. They are the oppressed, the lowly and the downcast. Yet, faced with countless throngs of the poor, Jesus was not afraid to identify with each of them: ‘Whatever you did to one of the least of these my brethren, you did to me’ (Mt 25:40). If we refuse to make this identification, we falsify the Gospel and water down God’s revelation. The God that Jesus came

to reveal is a Father who is generous, merciful, unfailing in his goodness and grace. He gives hope especially to those who are disillusioned and lacking in hope for the future” (no. 5).

“Commitment to the promotion of the poor, including their social promotion, is not foreign to the proclamation of the Gospel. On the contrary, it manifests the realism of Christian faith and its historical validity. The love that gives life to faith in Jesus makes it impossible for his disciples to remain enclosed in a stifling individualism or withdrawn into small circles of spiritual intimacy, with no influence on social life (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 183)” (no. 6).

“Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to seek, in every poor person whom you encounter, his or her true needs, not to stop at their most obvious material needs, but to discover their inner goodness, paying heed to their background and their way of expressing themselves, and in this way to initiate a true fraternal dialogue. Let us set aside the divisions born of ideological and political positions, and instead fix our gaze on what is essential, on what does not call for a flood of words, but a gaze of love and an outstretched hand” (no. 8).

“The hope of the poor defies deadly situations, for the poor know that they are especially loved by God, and this is stronger than any suffering or exclusion. Poverty does not deprive them of their God-given dignity; they live in the certainty that it will be fully restored to them by God himself, who is not indifferent to the lot of his lowliest sons and daughters. On the contrary, he sees their struggles and sorrows, he takes them by the hand, and he gives them strength and courage (cf. Ps 10:14). The hope of the poor is confirmed in the certainty that their voice is heard by the Lord, that in him they will find true justice, that their hearts will be strengthened and continue to love (cf. Ps 10:17)” (no. 10).

Bulletin Announcement

An opportunity to respond to Pope Francis’ call for the 3rd World Day of the Poor is happening next week when our special collection will support the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. In the United States, one in eight people lives in poverty. With this collection, you support programs that address the causes of poverty and provide a sustainable future for those who are struggling across the country. In addition, 25 percent of funds collected remain in our diocese to fund local anti-poverty projects. Please prayerfully consider how you can support this collection and work on the margins. More information about the Catholic Campaign for Human Development can be found at www.usccb.org/cchd/collection.

Bulletin Insert

Use [this bulletin insert](#) (bilingual) to help inform Catholics in your parish about the Church’s response to poverty in the U.S. through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

Parish Activity Suggestions

- **Share this audio message.** In your parish foyer, play [this video message](#) before and after masses to educate parishioners about the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the domestic anti-poverty campaign of the United States Catholic bishops.
- **Distribute a prayer card.** Distribute the Catholic Campaign for Human Development prayer card, featuring the [Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe for Justice](#) (also [en Español](#)), to help individuals and families pray about how God is calling them to respond to poverty.
- **Invite a speaker.** Work with your [diocesan coordinator for CCHD](#) to host a speaker who can share for a few minutes at the end of Mass about the work of a local organization that receives funding from CCHD.
- **Host a panel discussion about poverty, local and global.** Invite representatives from community organizations as well as parishioners who volunteer or work with those affected by poverty.

Prayers of the Faithful

R/. Lord, hear our prayer.

For our Holy Father, Pope Francis, our bishop, **N.**, and all church leaders, that they will continue to proclaim Christ's love and compassion for those in poverty, and that the Church will continue to teach about the need to work for justice in our world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

For all who work to address poverty in this country, especially those supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and for our parish community, that all may follow Christ's example of love and solidarity with persons who are poor, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

For the people of God, that we will open our hearts and souls to Christ's love for the poor so that we will speak and act in ways that will eliminate poverty and injustice in this country and throughout the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

For the 38.1 million people in our country who experience the pain and suffering of poverty every day, that their brothers and sisters in Christ will share their burden and at the same time work to create more just communities, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**



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