

WORLD DAY OF THE POOR 2024: 17 NOVEMBER 2024

This year the Church celebrates the 8th World Day of the Poor on the 17th November 2024. Pope Francis established this Day in his 2016 Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera* (Mercy with Misery). The Holy Father decided that the Day be observed on the 33rd Sunday of the Year, that is, on the Sunday before the Solemnity of Christ the King as a preparation for the Solemnity. Observance of the Day encourages the Church “to step outside” in order to engage with the many forms of poverty that crushes our world today. In a sense, the Day is a ‘project of help and hope’.

It has become customary for the Holy Father to begin the Day with the celebration of the Holy Mass followed by a luncheon meal with poor people of Rome in the Paul VI Hall. The Dicastery for Charity organises the lunch, while the Dicastery for Evangelisation care for the most vulnerable with various charitable initiatives.

This year some 1,300 poor people of Rome will enjoy lunch with Pope Francis after Holy Mass!



Pope Francis during his lunch with the poor, World Day of the Poor, November 2023 (VATICAN MEDIA Divisione Foto)

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Yet this year the protocol is slightly different because immediately before Holy Mass, Pope Francis will bless 13 keys, each a symbolic representation of the thirteen countries in which Vincentians will be inaugurating their “13 Houses” project. According to the Vatican News Newsletter of 12 November the “13 Houses” project

“...consists of building new homes for disadvantaged people in thirteen different countries. There, various charitable initiatives will take place, such as covering utility bills

for low-income families through parish connections. One of the countries welcoming this new project is Syria, which has been forgotten by much western media as it continues to suffer the devastating effects of almost two decades of conflict.”

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE WORLD DAY OF THE POOR: “THE PRAYER OF THE POOR RISES TO GOD” [Sirach 21:5]

The motto of Pope Francis’s Message for the 8th World Day of the Poor is: **The prayer of the poor rises to God**. This Bible quotation is taken from the Book of Sirach in which prayer is one of its main themes. Sirach reveals that *‘the poor hold a privileged place in God’s heart’* [Sir 35:17 – 18] and that God is “impatient” until He has rendered justice to the suffering of the poor. Indeed, Sirach attests *‘the Lord’s judgement will favour the poor.’* [Sir 21:5]

The Holy Father, therefore, exhorts us to pray for and with the poor, as praying with this interior attitude will enable us to see and understand the poor in our cities and communities. **“We need to make the prayer of the poor our own and pray together with them”** writes Pope Francis. In other words, and in a more ecclesial tone, our Holy Father explains that the Catholic Social Teaching of ‘a preferential option for the poor’ must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care for the poor.

Pope Francis includes in his Message a kind of poverty that has become commonplace in our times, but which we do not consider even nearly enough:

“The violence caused by wars clearly shows the arrogance of those who consider themselves to be powerful before men and women, but they are poor in the eyes of God.

How many more people are impoverished by misguided policies involving weapons! How many innocent victims! Yet we cannot turn our backs to this reality.”

Our Holy Father warns that ***if prayer does not translate into concrete action, it is in vain***; indeed, ***“faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”*** (Jas 2:17). However, charity without prayer risks becoming philanthropy that soon exhausts itself, cautions Pope Francis.

It is within this context that Pope Francis quotes St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata’s speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 26, 1985. With a Rosary in her hand Mother Teresa said:

“I am only a poor sister who prays. By praying, Jesus puts his love in my heart, and I go to give it to all the poor I meet along the way. Pray too! Pray, and you will notice the poor who are beside you. Perhaps on the same floor in your apartment building. Perhaps even in your houses, someone is waiting for your love. Pray, and your eyes will open, and your heart will fill with love”.

To read the Holy Father’s the rich and inspiring Message, navigate to this link:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/20240613-messaggio-viii-giornatamondiale-poveri-2024.html>