

# Reflection Guide for World Day of the Poor

The Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

(4<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor)

November 15, 2020

PovertyUSA.org • USCCB.org/CCHD

## 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.
- *[Reflect on 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. Reflect on any example of how your community has come together to support those most vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. If a local story is not possible, you can instead use the following text to think of your own example.]* In 2019, an estimated 34 million people were living 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 impact of the recent economic struggles and inequalities revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic. How has this experience challenged your understanding of poverty? How can you respond in solidarity with your most marginalized neighbors?
- Today is the fourth 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.

### Reflection:

- In the **second reading**, St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they must always be prepared for the coming of the Lord and actively live as “children of the light” who “stay alert” and remain committed to the teachings of Christ (v. 1-6), showing love of God and neighbor in all that they do.
- In today’s **Gospel**, Jesus encourages the disciples to use all that God has given them, to generously respond to the call of discipleship rather than prioritizing their own comfort or self-interest. Jesus uses the Parable of the Talents to remind his disciples that those

who will be considered righteous will be those who share God's grace and mercy with others rather than keeping this divine gift for themselves (v. 27-29).

- Today, followers of Christ are similarly challenged to respond to the call to discipleship. One aspect of this is opening our hearts to encounter the "other," particularly those who are poor and vulnerable. Pope Francis tells us that this focus is central to our lives of Christians: "In order to perform an act of worship acceptable to the Lord, we have to recognize that each person, even the poorest and most contemptible, is made in the image of God" (4<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor Message).
- The imperative to go outside of ourselves and encounter those in our community is especially important as our communities face the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we do not know the full economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has already had a profound negative effect on employment, food, and housing for millions of Americans. In his message for the [4th World Day of the Poor](#), Pope Francis writes, "We cannot feel 'alright' when any member of the human family is left behind and in the shadows. The silent cry of so many poor men, women and children should find the people of God at the forefront, always and everywhere, in efforts to give them a voice, to protect and support them in the face of hypocrisy and so many unfulfilled promises, and to invite them to share in the life of the community" (no. 4).
- Pope Francis reminds us that as Christians we must constantly cultivate this exercise of encounter, especially in light of what the pandemic has revealed "This pandemic arrived suddenly and caught us unprepared, sparking a powerful sense of bewilderment and helplessness. Yet hands never stopped reaching out to the poor. This has made us all the more aware of the presence of the poor in our midst and their need for help. Structures of charity, works of mercy, cannot be improvised. Constant organization and training is needed, based on the realization of our own need for an outstretched hand" ([Message for 4th World Day of the Poor](#), no. 7).
- On this 4<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor, we are asked to embody God's promise of justice and mercy, to live our lives in ways that lift up our neighbors, especially those who are poor and vulnerable: "Until we revive our sense of responsibility for our neighbor and for every person, grave economic, financial and political crises will continue" (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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

- This year, CCHD is marking its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – that's **50 years** of supporting low-income led anti-poverty projects across the country that empower new mothers, immigrants, the elderly, families, and individuals to be active participants in their lives and work with their community to transform our society into one which supports the flourishing of all our brothers and sisters. In the last seven months, CCHD's community organizations have quickly amplified their efforts to address COVID-19's devastating impacts.
- 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 Baltimore, MD, United Workers, a leadership development organization composed of **low-wage workers** has been working for years with local parishes and community groups on issues related to workers' rights, housing, community health, and environmental sustainability. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been working to achieve permanent housing and rent relief including extending the moratorium on evictions that was already granted. In late July 2020, they held a Truth Commission on Housing in the era of COVID-19.
  - **Example 2:** In the Dioceses of Yakima and Spokane in central and eastern Washington, a group called PREPARES en español is working with Pregnant women and struggling families with young children to minister to their material and spiritual needs, especially in the region's large and vibrant Hispanic communities. By training Spanish-speaking and bilingual volunteers and coordinators, and through developing Spanish-language materials, PREPARES en español offers support groups, family companions, and parent/child learning and playgroups that not only assist **vulnerable families** but do so in a context of respect for the unique cultural needs of Hispanic families.
  - **Example 3:** In Dallas, TX, Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI), a congregation-based organization worked with local law enforcement and city officials to implement a parish-id program to benefit **immigrants without status**. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DAI then worked with the county health department to accept these parish ids for access to COVID-19 testing. They also worked with a county judge to achieve a moratorium on evictions and electric shut-offs; and helped create a fund to help those affected by COVID-19 to pay their bills.
- Pope Francis writes in his [World Day of the Poor message](#): "The ability to stretch forth our hand shows that we possess an innate capacity to act in ways that give meaning to life" (no. 5). This echoes the reflection in Pope Francis's 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) that "challenges the attitude of those who prefer to keep their hands in their pockets and to remain unmoved by situations of poverty in which they are often complicit" ([Message for 4th World Day of the Poor](#), no. 9).

## **Quotes from Pope Francis' Message for the Fourth World Day of the Poor**

"Keeping our gaze fixed on the poor is difficult, but more necessary than ever if we are to give proper direction to our personal life and the life of society. It is not a matter of fine words but of a concrete commitment inspired by divine charity. Each year, on the World Day of the Poor, I reiterate this basic truth in the life of the Church, for the poor are and always will be with us to help us welcome Christ's presence into our daily lives (cf. Jn 12:8)." (no. 3).

"Now is a good time to recover 'the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world... We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty... When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care for the environment' (Laudato Si', 229). In a word, until we revive our sense of responsibility for our neighbor and for every person, grave economic, financial and political crises will continue" (no. 7).

"This year's theme – 'Stretch forth your hand to the poor' – is thus a summons to responsibility and commitment as men and women who are part of our one human family. It encourages us to bear the burdens of the weakest, in accord with the words of Saint Paul: 'Through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'... Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ' (Gal 5:13-14; 6:2). The Apostle teaches that the freedom bestowed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes us individually responsible for serving others, especially the weakest. This is not an option, but rather a sign of the authenticity of the faith we profess." (no. 8).

"The command: 'Stretch forth your hand to the poor' challenges the attitude of those who prefer to keep their hands in their pockets and to remain unmoved by situations of poverty in which they are often complicit" (no. 9).

"But second, there is also an end or goal towards which each of us is tending. And this means that our lives are a project and a process. The 'end' of all our actions can only be love. This is the ultimate goal of our journey, and nothing should distract us from it. This love is one of sharing,

dedication and service, born of the realization that we were first loved and awakened to love” (no. 10).

## Join the Conversation

*Share these sample messages on social media, in an email or bulletin, or with a friend to join the conversation this World Day of the Poor.*

An opportunity to respond to Pope Francis’ call for the 4<sup>th</sup> 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, more than 34 million people live 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](http://www.usccb.org/cchd/collection).

For over 50 years, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has been working to empower new mothers, immigrants, the elderly, and families to together address the root causes of poverty in their communities. Continue to observe the 4<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Poor and celebrate CCHD’s 50th anniversary and work address poverty and fight systemic racism with its annual national collection, happening the weekend of November 21-22. Learn more at [www.usccb.org/cchd/collection](http://www.usccb.org/cchd/collection).

## Bulletin Insert

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

## Activity Suggestions

- **Learn more about CCHD’s history of transformative work.** The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has dedicated decades to addressing racial and economic disparities across the United States. [Learn more](#) and see how they are celebrating 50 years of supporting initiatives that empower families, immigrants, new mothers, the elderly, and those in need.
- **Share a prayer card.** Share 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, in-person or virtually, 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 for a virtual or in-person conversation.

## 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 34 million people in our country who experience the pain and suffering of poverty every day, especially those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, 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/.**

For those who have lost their lives, especially those who died from COVID-19, that they might be welcomed into the heavenly kingdom; and for their families, that they might be comforted and find security, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**



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