

This is an excerpt from Pope Francis' message :

## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

### FOR THE EIGHT WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

17 November 2024

*The prayer of the poor rises up to God (cf. Sir 21:5)*

Dear brothers and sisters,

6. To the poor who dwell in our cities and are part of our communities, I say: do not lose this certainty! God is attentive to each of you and is close to you. He does not forget you nor could he ever do so. We all have had the experience of prayers that seem to remain unanswered. Sometimes we ask to be freed from a misery that makes us suffer and humiliates us, and God seems not to hear our cry. However, God's silence does not mean he is inattentive to our sufferings; rather, it contains a word that must be received with trust, surrendering ourselves to him and to his will. Sirach again attests to this: the Lord's judgment will be in favour of the poor (cf. Sir 21:5). From poverty, therefore, the song of the most genuine hope can spring up. Let us remember that "whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades" (Evangelii Gaudium, 2).

7. The World Day of the Poor has now become a fixture for every ecclesial community. It is a pastoral opportunity not to be underestimated, for it challenges every believer to listen to the prayer of the poor, becoming aware of their presence and needs. It is an opportune occasion to implement initiatives that concretely help the poor and to recognize and support the many volunteers who dedicate themselves passionately to those most in need. We must thank the Lord for the people who make themselves available to listen to and support the poorest among us. They are priests, consecrated persons, lay men and women who, by their testimony, give voice to God's response to the prayer of those who turn to him. This silence, therefore, is broken every time a person in need is welcomed and embraced. The poor still have much to teach us because in a culture that has placed wealth at the forefront and often sacrifices the dignity of people on the altar of material goods, they swim against the tide, highlighting that what is essential for life is something else entirely.

Prayer, then, is verified by authentic charity that manifests itself as encounter and proximity. 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. "Without daily prayer lived with fidelity, our acts are empty, they lose their profound

soul, and are reduced to being mere activism” (BENEDICT XVI, Catechesis, April 25, 2012). We must avoid this temptation and always be vigilant with the strength and perseverance that comes from the Holy Spirit, who is the giver of life.

8. In this context, it is beautiful to recall the testimony left to us by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a woman who gave her life for the poor. Saint Teresa continually repeated that it was from prayer that she drew the strength and faith for her mission of service to the least among us. When she spoke at the General Assembly of the UN on October 26, 1985, showing everyone the rosary she always held in her hand, she 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” .

How can we not recall here in the city of Rome, Saint Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-1783), whose body rests and is venerated in the parish church of Santa Maria ai Monti. A pilgrim from France to Rome, rejected by many monasteries, he spent the last years of his life poor among the poor, spending hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, with the rosary, reciting the breviary, reading the New Testament and the Imitation of Christ. Having no place to stay, he usually slept in a corner of the ruins of the Colosseum like a “vagabond of God,” making his life a ceaseless prayer that rose up to God.

9. As we journey towards the Holy Year, I urge everyone to become pilgrims of hope, setting tangible goals for a better future. Let us not forget to keep “the little details of love” (Gaudete et Exsultate, 145): stopping, drawing near, giving a little attention, a smile, a caress, a word of comfort. These gestures are not automatic; they require a daily commitment and are often hidden and silent, but strengthened by prayer. In this time, when the song of hope seems to give way to the clamour of arms, to the cry of many innocent wounded, and the silence of the countless victims of wars, we turn to God with our plea for peace. We stretch out our hands to receive peace as a precious gift for we are “poor” in this regard, while at the same time committing ourselves to weave it back into daily life.

10. We are called in every circumstance to be friends of the poor, following in the footsteps of Jesus who always began by showing solidarity when dealing with the least among us. May the Mother of God, Mary Most Holy, who appeared at Banneux and left a message not to be forgotten: “I am the Virgin of the poor,” sustain us on this journey. To Mary, whom God has looked upon with favour for her humble poverty, accomplishing great things through her obedience, we entrust our prayers, convinced that they will rise to heaven and be heard.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 13 June 2024, Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua, Patron of the Poor

FRANCIS

[Eighth World Day of the Poor, 2024: The prayer of the poor rises up to God \(cf. Sir 21:5\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francis/messages/evangelical/2024/08/20240815_8th-world-day-poor-2024_en.html)