

World Day of the Poor – Sunday 19 November 2023

Homily Notes

General note for Homilists:

The World Day of the Poor is a Catholic observance, celebrated on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time since 2017. It was established by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia et Misera*, issued on 20 November 2016 to celebrate the end of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

Pope Francis begins his letter with this paragraph:

“Misericordia et misera is a phrase used by Saint Augustine in recounting the story of Jesus’ meeting with the woman taken in adultery (cf. Jn 8:1-11). It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or apt way of expressing the mystery of God’s love when it touches the sinner: “the two of them alone remained: mercy with misery”. (Augustine on the Gospel of John.) What great mercy and divine justice shine forth in this narrative! Its teaching serves not only to throw light on the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, but also to point out the path that we are called to follow in the future.”

Scriptures for the Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time 2023

Entrance Antiphon Jer:29: 11, 12, 14

“You will call upon me, and I will answer you.”

First Reading: Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31

“A perfect wife, who can find her...”

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5

“Happy are those who fear the Lord...”

Second Reading: First Thessalonians 5: 1-6

“...The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night”

Alleluia: John 15: 4a, 5b

“Live in me and let me live in you...my branches bear much fruit.”

Gospel: Matthew 25: 14-30

The parable of the talents. “You have been faithful in small things: come and join in your master’s happiness.”

Communion Antiphon Ps 72:28

“To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.”

A good start for homily preparation

- As you scan the notes above, (the reference to Francis’ letter and the brief summaries of the scriptures for the Mass (including Entrance and Communion antiphons), what word or phrase leaps out at you,

attracts you, inspires you. If nothing, then scan the notes above again. Often these first thoughts are the best start for a homily.

- Cut and paste the section above into an email and send to two or three parishioners asking them to send you one or two homily points for your World Day of the Poor homily. If you use these points in the homily, be open in the homily about your method, ie, *“I asked two or three parishioners...”*
- Consider “poor” in the broadest sense, ie not just those who lack material resources but any person who has need...think of the lonely, the vulnerable, the wounded. You might find it helpful to (in prayer) imagine your parishioners at Mass on Sunday... think of them in their regular seats. Consider the parents of the children in your parish school or at High School. What are their joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties? What is their need for God (that is a classical definition of the poor person – one who knows their dependence on God.)

An unexpected resource

Use CHATGPT, typing in “World Day of Poor, Pope Francis, three key points.” If you use any part of this in your homily tell the people you used CHATGPT. They will be interested to hear what the computer says. Here’s the CHATGPT response:

- 1. The Poor as a Priority:** Pope Francis emphasizes that the poor should be a priority for the Church and society as a whole. He calls for a change in mindset, **urging us to see the poor not as a burden or a problem, but as individuals with inherent dignity and potential.** He encourages us to recognize their value and to work towards creating a more inclusive and just society that leaves no one behind.
- 2. Encounter and Solidarity:** Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of **encountering the poor and building relationships with them.** He calls for a culture of encounter, where we listen to their stories, understand their struggles, and walk alongside them in solidarity. He reminds us that true solidarity is not just about giving material assistance, but about recognizing the humanity of the poor and working together to address the root causes of poverty.
- 3. Conversion and Transformation:** Pope Francis calls for a conversion of hearts and minds, challenging us to **examine our own attitudes and actions towards the poor.** He invites us to reflect on how we can live more simply, share our resources, and work towards a more equitable distribution of wealth. He emphasizes that our response to the poor should not be limited to acts of charity, but should also involve advocating for justice and working towards systemic change.

A story or two

- A few years ago a friend suggested to me that when he arrives at the entrance to Heaven he expected that the only criteria for admission will be the number of people who were the most vulnerable, weak, hungry, lonely etc on earth who were pleading on his behalf that he be admitted. You will be able to frame this idea into a useable idea.
- How many people who are deeply vulnerable (poorest of the poor to use St. Teresa of Calcutta's phrase) know your name and consider you to be a friend? Perhaps this friendship is the measure of the culture of encounter which is central to Pope Francis' understanding of our call to be with the poor.
- Pope Francis told thousands of journalists just after his election as pope in 2013 that he took to heart the words of his friend and chose to be called after St. Francis of Assisi, "the man of poverty" He added "How I would like a church that is poor and that is for the poor,"

Support your homily with some newsletter gap-fillers. Invite your parish secretary to search online "quotations from Misericordia et Misera" and use the best quotes as newsletter gap-fillers over the next few weeks.