

# Pastoral Aid for the Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

(1<sup>st</sup> World Day of the Poor)

November 19, 2017

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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. Today, we will 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 43 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 first World Day of the Poor, a day established by Pope Francis on which he asks all of us to reflect on Jesus’ great love for those who experience poverty, encounter our brothers and sisters in need, and work alongside them to put faith in action.

**First Reading** (Prv 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31); **Psalms** (128:1-2, 3, 4-5); **Second Reading** (1 Thes 5:1-6), and **Gospel** (Mt 25:14-30)

- This Sunday’s readings connect perfectly with Pope Francis’ challenge to “concrete deeds” instead of “empty words” ([Message for 1<sup>st</sup> World Day of the Poor](#), no. 1).
- In the **first reading**, the author of the Book of Proverbs describes concrete deeds as essential. A holy person uses the gifts she has been given, “reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy” (v. 20).
- The **Psalms** calls “blessed” those who “walk” in God’s ways (v. 1), and in the **second reading**, Paul urges the Thessalonians to be attentive to how they are living.
- In today’s **Gospel**, Matthew recounts Jesus’ parable, in which each servant is given talents to care for and cultivate. Those who multiply what the master (representing God)

has given them are rewarded, while the one who did nothing with the talents is punished.

- *Empty words vs. concrete deeds!* Pope Francis warns about the contrast “between the *empty words* so frequently on our lips and the *concrete deeds* against which we are called to measure ourselves” (no. 1). We say that we want to encounter Christ, but Pope Francis writes: “If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. The Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen, through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters” (no. 3).

### 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 live our faith through concrete deeds in our parish, our neighborhood, and our communities on this World Day of the Poor?
- In addition to being the 1<sup>st</sup> World Day of the Poor, this Sunday is also the collection, taken today 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 healthcare, 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](#) (County Level view – All Markers) to see groups that CCHD funds in your diocese.]*
  - **Example 1:** Around Charleston, South Carolina, many **children live in poverty**, which causes undue stress and uncertainty in their lives. In addition, deteriorating school systems struggle to provide quality education and appropriate discipline, with a high rate of school based arrests. By engaging congregations and communities all over the city, the Charleston Area Justice Ministry is working to change systems and keep juveniles in school and out of incarceration. With your support of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development collection, the Charleston Area Justice Ministry is able to provide community engagement to reduce youth arrests and violence.
  - **Example 2:** When a family **cannot find affordable housing** or is forced to pay a high rent it cannot afford, the members of the family suffer and often go without. In Lexington, Kentucky, project BUILD noticed that the demand for affordable

housing was greatly outpacing its availability. With your support of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, BUILD has been able to increase the amount of affordable housing in the Lexington area by both creating and renovating housing for families who would otherwise not have access.

- **Example 3:** For low-wage workers, **wage theft** is an all-too-common problem. Many workers do not know their rights or do not fully understand the laws that employers are expected to abide by, and are taken advantage of, resulting in thousands of dollars of lost pay for individuals. With your support of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the Center of Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa is tackling these issues. The Center of Worker Justice is identifying new wage theft cases and is educating workers about their rights. Your support of this campaign help ensure that a just day's work receives just pay.
- Pope Francis writes in his World Day of the Poor message: "When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he answered in the words with which the poor speak to our one Father, in whom all acknowledge themselves as brothers and sisters. The *Our Father* is a prayer said in the plural: the bread for which we ask is 'ours,' and that entails sharing, participation and joint responsibility" (no. 8).
- This echoes reflection in the *Catechism* on the Lord's Prayer: "The presence of those who hunger because they lack bread opens up another profound meaning of this petition. The drama of hunger in the world calls Christians who pray sincerely to exercise responsibility toward their brethren, both in their personal behavior and in their solidarity with the human family" (par. 2831). (See also: par. 2830-2833 and Pope Benedict, *Sacrament of Charity* [*Sacramentum Caritatis*], no. 90.)
- Together, we can take responsibility and support concrete deeds to respond to Jesus' love for our brothers and sisters who are vulnerable. I ask you to support today's collection with generosity!

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

"This *Day* is meant, above all, to encourage believers to react against a culture of discard and waste, and to embrace the culture of encounter" (no. 6).

"This Sunday, if there are poor people where we live who seek protection and assistance, let us draw close to them: it will be a favorable moment to encounter the God we seek. Following the teaching of Scripture (cf. *Gen* 18:3-5; *Heb* 13:2), let us welcome them as honored guests at our table; they can be teachers who help us live the faith more consistently" (no. 7).

"If we truly wish to encounter Christ, we have to touch his body in the suffering bodies of the poor, as a response to the sacramental communion bestowed in the Eucharist. The Body of Christ, broken in the sacred liturgy, can be seen, through charity and sharing, in the faces and persons of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters" (no. 3).

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"Precisely because he kept his gaze fixed on Christ, Francis was able to see and serve him in the poor. If we want to help change history and promote real development, we need to hear the cry of the poor and commit ourselves to ending their marginalization" (no. 4).

## Bulletin Announcement

Respond to Pope Francis' call for the 1<sup>st</sup> World Day of the Poor. Please be generous in this week's second collection for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. In the United States, one in six 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 remains 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).

The announcement is also available [en Español](#).

## 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

Also [en Español](#).

### **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 as they educate the Church about the need to work for justice in our world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

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

That we, the people of God, will open our hearts and souls to justice 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 43 million people in our country who experience the pain and suffering of poverty every day, may we join with them to share their burden and at the same time work to create more just communities, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**