



For people living on the margins

SEPTEMBER

“Let us pray for those people who live on the margins of society, in inhumane living conditions, that they may not be neglected by institutions and never be considered outcasts”



PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

MESSAGE FOR THE FIFTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR¹¹

Francis

14 November 2021

6. Nonetheless, one question, which is by no means obvious, remains. How can we give a tangible response to the millions of the poor who frequently encounter only indifference, if not resentment? What path of justice must be followed so that social inequalities can be overcome and human dignity, so often trampled upon, can be restored? Individualistic lifestyles are complicit in generating poverty, and often saddle the poor with responsibility for their condition. Yet poverty is not the result of fate; it is the result of selfishness. It is critical, therefore, to generate *development processes* in which the abilities of all are valued, so that complementarity of skills and diversity of roles can lead to a common resource of mutual participation. There are many forms of poverty among the “rich” that might be relieved by the wealth of the “poor”, if only they could meet and get to know each other! None are so poor that they cannot give something of themselves in mutual exchange. The poor cannot be only those who receive; they must be put in a position to give, because they know well how to respond with generosity. How many examples of sharing are before our eyes! The poor often teach us about solidarity and sharing. True, they may be people who lack *some things*, often *many things*, including the bare *necessities*, yet they do not lack *everything*, for they retain *the dignity of God's children* that nothing and no one can take away from them.

7. For this reason, *a different approach to poverty* is required. This is a challenge that governments and world institutions need to take up with a farsighted social model capable of countering the new forms of poverty that are now sweeping the world and will decisively affect coming decades. If the poor are marginalized, as if they

¹¹ See full message:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/20210613-messaggio-v-giornatamondiale-poveri-2021.html>

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were to blame for their condition, then the very concept of democracy is jeopardized and every social policy will prove bankrupt. With great humility, we should confess that we are often incompetent when it comes to the poor. We talk about them in the abstract; we stop at statistics and we think we can move people's hearts by filming a documentary. Poverty, on the contrary, should motivate us to creative planning, aimed at increasing the freedom needed to live a life of fulfilment according to the abilities of each person. It is an illusion, which we should reject, to think that freedom comes about and grows through the possession of money. Serving the poor effectively moves us into action and makes it possible to find the most suitable ways of raising and promoting this part of humanity that all too often is anonymous and voiceless, but which has imprinted on it the face of the Saviour who asks for our help.

June 2016

<https://thepopevideo.org/solidarity-in-cities/>