MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV FOR THE TENTH WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

XXXIII Sunday of Ordinary Time, 15 November 2026

The Lord is the refuge of the poor (cf. Ps 14,6)

1. The Lord is a refuge for the poor (cf. *Ps* 14:6). The words of the Psalmist point the way forward as we prepare for the 10th World Day of the Poor. Once again, we must return to the Word of God to reaffirm the importance of the poor in the life of the Church. The words of the Psalm serve as a standard for Christian living because they reveal the face of God and acknowledge human poverty. Indeed, at a dramatic moment in history — the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem — the people felt deprived of God's presence and experienced unprecedented material and moral misery.

To every generation, this Word appears in all its relevance. From the very beginning, it reveals the contradiction into which we still so often fall today. The first observation, in fact, is this: "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good" (*Ps* 14:1). It highlights the contrast between those who act wisely and those who, on the other hand, go through life as if there were nothing greater than themselves. Sadly, we see that even today there is widespread social injustice arising from arrogant corruption, which is as deplorable as it is discriminatory. The loss of a sense of the transcendent in daily life is no longer so much a theoretical denial of God's existence; rather, it is evident in the failure to take his goodness and mercy into account in the pursuit of personal and social justice.

The poor are the first to suffer the consequences, and it is no coincidence that their numbers are growing in many societies. The absence of God no longer places people side by side in mutual respect, but places one above the other in a relationship of domination and oppression. Thus, a desecrating logic of abuse and exclusion is laid bare, one that marginalizes and humiliates. Not only individuals but entire populations find themselves in this condition. The words of the Psalm still ring true: They "eat up my people as they eat bread" (*Ps* 14:4).

2. Today, the poor's cry for justice is silenced by a multitude of increasingly subtle tactics, to the point of rendering voiceless their every effort to make their demands heard. The digital world exacerbates prejudice against them and reinforces the veil of indifference surrounding their plight. The poor have no choice but to cry out to God (cf. *Ps* 34:7) and bring their lament before him, certain that they will be heard because God is faithful and rich in mercy. Even today, those who are oppressed, humiliated and defenseless grow in the certainty that they must entrust themselves to God, filled with faith and expectation. In this complete surrender, a sense of one's own dignity blossoms anew; they recognize sisters and brothers with whom to share their dreams, and hope quietly becomes reality. Taking refuge in God means finding true and lasting protection — the kind that the powerful cannot guarantee and prefer to deny.

The poor, however, are more able than others to recognize what is essential, because they live on the essentials. More like Christ than anyone else, they recognize God as their refuge even when circumstances seem to contradict this, and they are filled with hope for his justice, which will not be long in coming. In the night of abandonment and loneliness, the poor "live in the shelter of the Most High" (cf. *Ps* 91:1). All who are afflicted, all who suffer injustice and are wronged, all who are in suffering and pain, all who are lonely and without a sense of purpose in life can find consolation and renewed motivation in the Lord

3. That God is their refuge is not merely a promise; it becomes a reality in the person of Jesus Christ. God dwells among us through the Incarnation of the Son, who makes concrete and visible the refuge for which we hope. Jesus Christ is truly God's refuge for the poor. Through his obedience to the Father, he descends to the lowest point, where the least of these are found. He reaches out to everyone and offers each a safe refuge: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (*Mt* 11:28). In Jesus, God not only protects but shares in human poverty all the way to the cross.

The poor of our day are the forgotten and the marginalized: robbed not only of bread, but also of a voice and a face. May they encounter the Son of God, who draws near to everyone without neglecting anyone. May they encounter him, first and foremost, in those who call themselves Christians. In the Church, his Body, it is Jesus who offers bread and friendship; he brings light and opens a horizon of hope; he calls each person by name and restores dignity to all. Jesus of Nazareth is God's gift to the poor. In him, all promises become reality. For those who lack a home, a job, education, food or good health, a new path opens: sharing as an expression of the Kingdom of God (cf. *Mt* 5:3). The obsession of those who accumulate wealth only for themselves is opposed by God's steadfastness which, through the witness of real people, opens hearts and welcomes all into his love.

4. In Christ, therefore, we are called to become poor and to be a refuge for the poor. The Christian community cannot remain indifferent to the many who today stand at the door but remain invisible to those who are shut within their own walls. The Church, by its very nature, is called to be poor and a refuge for the poor. Let us not forget Saint Augustine's commentary on the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus: "He has kept the name of the rich man to himself and told us the name of the poor man. The name of the rich man was on everyone's lips, but God kept it to himself; the name of the poor man was passed over in silence, but God revealed it to us. ... What would you choose? To be poor like Lazarus or rich like the other man? Do not be deceived! Listen to how it ended and take note of which is the wrong choice" (*Sermon* 33A, 4).

As I recalled in the Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*, "God shows a preference for the poor: the Lord's words of hope and liberation are addressed first of all to them. Therefore, even in their poverty or weakness, no one should feel abandoned. And the Church, if she wants to be Christ's Church, must be a Church of the Beatitudes, one that makes room for the little ones and walks poor with the poor, a place where the poor have a privileged plac e" (*cf.* 21).

Certain questions inevitably arise, and on this 10th World Day of the Poor, we urgently need to let them resonate in our minds and hearts. Are we a sign of a God who is a refuge for the poor? Are we aware of our own poverty, and do we prefer it to unjust wealth? Do we go where the poor are, experiencing their marginalization? Do we listen to their thoughts and share their hopes? Do we speak their names with divine tenderness? Does our charity reawaken and sustain in them the desire for justice and redemption? These and many other questions call for a serious examination of conscience, to assess how much more we are called to do on behalf of the poor and for their liberation. Then we will see that the poor themselves become a refuge for others. The experience of poverty makes them particularly sensitive to a renewed solidarity in the face of challenges.

Christ's love, in fact, makes us sharers in God's life of love. In this sense, Christians are called not only to seek refuge in God, but also to become a refuge for others in God, "not to distinguish between those who assist and those who are assisted, between those who seem to give and those who seem to receive, between those who appear poor and those who feel they offer time, skills and help. We are the Lord's Church, a Church of the poor, all precious, all individuals, each one a bearer of a unique Word of God. Each one is a gift for the others. " (*Homily*, August 17, 2025).

5. The eighth centenary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi prompts us to recall how, upon arriving in Rome as a pilgrim to the tomb of the Apostle Peter, he was moved with compassion for the beggars. To understand and experience their suffering, he took off his own clothes and exchanged them for the ragged garments of one of them, sitting down to beg and spending the entire day among the poor with a joyful spirit (cf. *Fonti Francescane* 1405–1406). We wish to bear witness that it is possible, even today, to experience the same joy by putting ourselves in the shoes of the poor and listening to them rather than merely speaking about them. Those who have God as their refuge have the freedom to make prophetic choices, which testify to the fact that everything can be reimagined from the ground up, in the humility and fraternity that alone can heal a world wounded by arrogance.

I am confident that this 10th World Day of the Poor will serve as a significant step toward rediscovering the faces of so many brothers and sisters who seek refuge in God and long to feel at home in our communities. Let us remain faithful to the Word of God, which calls us to a conversion of heart. May the Virgin Mary, who in the crucified flesh of her Son contemplated the love of God that fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty-handed (cf. *Lk* 1:53), intercede for us.

From the Vatican, 13 June 2026, Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua.

LEO PP. XIV

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