



## Fifth World Day of the Poor

### FULL LAUNCH OF LAUDATO SI' ACTION PLATFORM

The full launch of the Laudato Si' Action Platform was forwarded from 4 October to 7 November, the fifth World Day of the Poor. This was to ensure that the website would be fully populated with resources to support planning that will implement the seven *Laudato Si'* goals.

The Laudato Si' website is managed by the Vatican Human Development department and, as a world-wide initiative, is available in a number of languages. The resource section already carries a number of resources, including the Australian Catholic Bishops' *Cry of the Earth Cry of the Poor* document and supporting resources. Dr Sandie Cornish from the Bishop's office for Justice, Ecology and Peace and staff from the Archdiocese of Brisbane's Justice and Peace Office are invited contributors to this global project. The contents of the full launch should be available for Australia from 15 November.

<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>

Cardinal Peter Turkson writes: "The Laudato Si' Action Platform envisages an ongoing and shared

Journey with the goal of growing exponentially over the coming years of this crucial decade. The platform hopes to create a peoples' movement from below to contribute to the critical mass needed for radical societal transformation.

### CRY OF THE EARTH & CRY OF THE POOR

Throughout *Laudato Si'* the link between the deterioration of the environment and its impact on the most vulnerable people is described by many examples. In our region of Oceania, the impact of rising sea levels is destroying people's livelihoods and is creating climate refugees. As seen during the COVID pandemic, the poorest people are those who have suffered most. Launching the Laudato Si' Action Platform on the World Day of the Poor makes a great deal of sense.

**...we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.**

*Laudato Si* 49



Pope Francis' Message for the World Day of the Poor is available in a number of languages at:  
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/poveri/documents/20210613-messaggio-v-giornatamondiale-poveri-2021.html>

The following excerpts from the message with questions for reflection were prepared by Dr Sandie Cornish from the the Office of Justice, Ecology and Peace.

### FOR REFLECTION

#### The Poor Evangelize Us

Pope Francis says: "the poor, always and everywhere, evangelize us, because they enable us to discover in new ways the true face of the Father. They have much to teach us. Besides participating in the *sensus fidei*, they know the suffering of Christ through their own sufferings" (n 2).

We often think that we are called to help people and communities who are disadvantaged, but Pope Francis reminds us that "we are called to discover Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and to welcome the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate to us through them" (n 2). People who are disadvantaged, marginalized or vulnerable are our evangelists.

- *Have you ever been evangelized by someone who is disadvantaged, marginalized or vulnerable? What happened, and how did you respond?*
- *In what ways might the Church become more open to being evangelized by the poor?*

#### Mutuality and Closeness

Jesus sides with the poor and "shares their lot" (n 3). He is not only close to them, he is one of them. Pope Francis reminds us that poor people are not outsiders but part of our communities – 'they' are our sisters and brothers. While charity presupposes a giver and a receiver, mutual sharing generates fraternity and solidarity – it makes us sisters and brothers. It lays the foundation for justice. (n 3).

If we want to "see Jesus in person" we know where to turn. Pope Francis says, "the poor are a sacrament of Christ; they represent his person and point to him" (n 3). In them Christ is always with us.

- *How might embracing closeness and fraternity, shape our response to disadvantaged people and communities? What would our action look like?*
- *Which saints show us how to be close to the poor?*

#### Solidarity Not Blame

Pope Francis notes that poor people are often blamed for their situation and seen as a "burden for an economic system focused on the interests of a few privileged groups" (n 5) however "poverty is not the result of fate; it is the result of selfishness" (n 6).

The pandemic has only increased existing inequality, impacting disproportionately on those who were already disadvantaged or vulnerable.

Pope Francis reminds us that the "Gospel summons us to display special concern for the poor and to recognize the varied and excessive forms of moral and social disorder that are generating ever new forms of poverty" (n 5). Social solidarity and generosity are needed, not blame.

- *Who do you hear blaming the poor for their situation? How do you respond?*
- *What new forms of poverty do you see emerging?*

#### A New Approach

Pope Francis calls for "development processes in which the abilities of all are valued" (n 6). He points out that "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!" (n 6). Disadvantaged people are not simply recipients – they have something to give, and they know how to be generous. Pope Francis notes that they "often teach us about solidarity and sharing" (n 6). He concludes that a "different approach to poverty is required" (n 7) - one in which we are more conscious of being in a mutual exchange.

Pope Francis contrasts talking about poor people in the abstract, stopping at statistics and thinking that "we can move people's hearts by filming a documentary" with "creative planning, aimed at increasing the freedom needed to live a life of fulfilment according to the abilities of each person" (n 7).

- *If our current approach to poverty is not working, what needs to change?*
- *What are some alternatives?*
- *What forms of poverty do rich people suffer from, and how might disadvantaged people help to address them?*

Full discussion guide is available at:

<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/resources/discussion-guides/>