

7th World Day of
the Poor

**Do not turn
your face away
from anyone
who is poor.**

Tobit 4:7



Excerpts from
Pope Francis' message.
www.vatican.va

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The World Day of the Poor is a fruitful sign of the Father's mercy and a support for the lives of our communities. As its celebration becomes more and more rooted in the pastoral life of the Church, it enables us to discover ever anew the heart of the Gospel. Our daily efforts to welcome the poor are still not enough. A great river of poverty is traversing our cities and swelling to the point of overflowing; it seems to overwhelm us, so great are the needs of our brothers and sisters who plead for our help, support and solidarity. For this reason, on the Sunday before the Solemnity of Jesus Christ King of the Universe, we gather around his Table to receive from him once more the gift and strength to live lives of poverty and to serve the poor.

“Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor” (Tob 4:7). These words help us to understand the essence of our witness. By reflecting on the Book of Tobit, a little-known text of the Old Testament, yet one that is charming and full of wisdom, we can better appreciate the message the sacred writer wished to communicate. We find ourselves before a scene of family life: a father, Tobit, embraces his son, Tobias, who is about to set out on a lengthy journey. The elderly Tobit fears that he will never again see his son, and so leaves him his “spiritual testament”. Tobit had been deported to Nineveh and is now blind, and thus doubly poor. At the same time, he remains always certain of one thing, expressed by his very name: “The Lord has been my good”. As a God-fearing man and a good father, he wants to leave his son not simply material riches, but the witness of the right path to follow in life. So he tells him: “Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live

uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing” (4:5).

We see immediately that what the elderly Tobit asks of his son is not simply to think of God and to call upon him in prayer. He speaks of making concrete gestures, carrying out good works and practising justice. He goes on to state this even more clearly: “To all those who practice righteousness give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it” (4:7).

May our concern for the poor always be marked by Gospel realism. Our sharing should meet the concrete needs of the other, rather than being just a means of ridding ourselves of superfluous goods. Here too, Spirit-led discernment is demanded, in order to recognize the genuine needs of our brothers and sisters and not our own personal hopes and aspirations.



I have come to realize that perfect charity means putting up with other people's faults, not being at all taken aback by their faults, being edified by the smallest acts of virtue that we see practised. But above all, I have come to realize that charity must not remain locked in the depths of one's heart.

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus