

OVERCOMING INDIFFERENCE

In his message for the first World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis wrote:

We know how hard it is for our contemporary world to see poverty clearly for what it is. Yet in myriad ways poverty challenges us daily, in faces marked by suffering, marginalization, oppression, violence, torture and imprisonment, war, deprivation of freedom and dignity, ignorance and illiteracy, medical emergencies and shortage of work, trafficking and slavery, exile, extreme poverty and forced migration. Poverty has the face of women, men and children exploited by base interests, crushed by the machinations of power and money. What a bitter and endless list we would have to compile were we to add the poverty born of social injustice, moral degeneration, the greed of a chosen few, and generalized indifference!

Against the challenge of these social sins, it's easy to throw up our hands and concede defeat. Many forms of material and spiritual poverty poison people's hearts and violate human dignity, yet we are called to "respond with a new vision of life and society." The message and example of Pope Francis — indeed, the message and example of Jesus himself — is that our faith does not permit us to sit idly by in the face of evil. Instead, we have the privilege and responsibility of working together to help make the world better. This work begins with a handshake, a smile, a conversation, a shared meal, an encounter.

So let us ask for the grace not to close our eyes to God who sees us, or to our neighbor who asks something of us, as together we pray...

All too often, Lord, we turn away from the world's many problems, which seem too big, too complex, or too far away. Forgive us our indifference.

It is easier, Lord, to see only what is around us: our lives, our homes, our challenges. Forgive us our isolation.

Help us to see with your eyes: eyes which notice one another and help us understand.

Help us to dream your dream: of communities that reach out and dialogue and where diverse people creatively cooperate.

Help us to be people of solidarity and action, so moved by prayer, encounter, and understanding that peace can become a reality.

Amen.